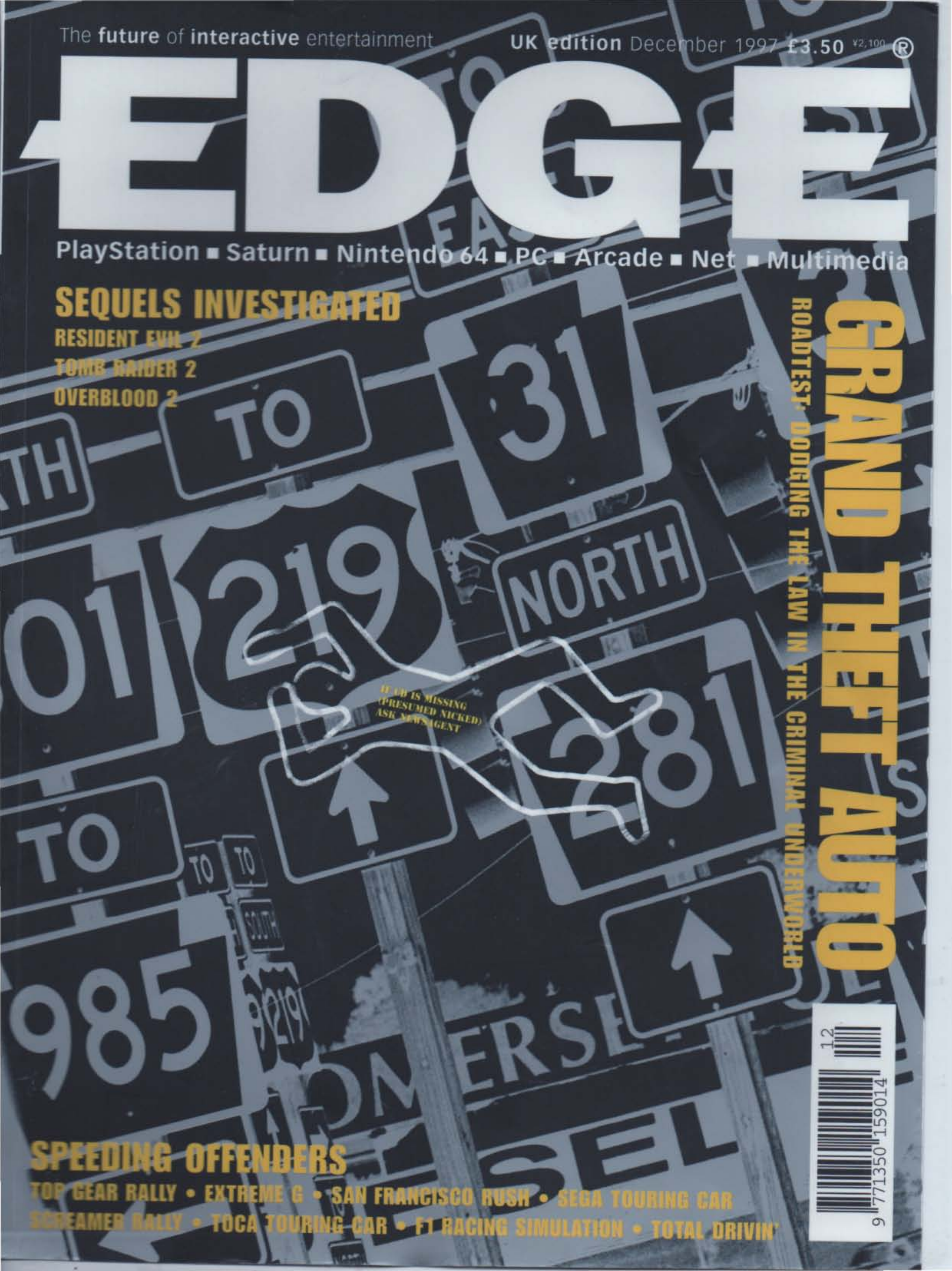

The future of interactive entertainment
UK edition December 1997 £3.50 ¥2,100 ®
EDGE
PlayStation ■ Saturn ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PC ■ Arcade ■ Net ■ Multimedia
SEQUELS INVESTIGATED
RESIDENT EVIL 2
TOMB RAIDER 2
OVERBLOOD 2
GRAND THEFT AUTO
ROADTEST: DODGING THE LAW IN THE CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD
IS MISSING
(PRESUMED NICKED)
ASK NEWSAGENT
SPEEDING OFFENDERS
TOP GEAR RALLY • EXTREME G • SAN FRANCISCO RUSH • SEGA TOURING CAR
SCREAMER RALLY • TOCA TOURING CAR • F1 RACING SIMULATION • TOTAL DRIVIN'
9 771350 159014 12



JUSTICE. DUTY.





It's a point often laboured, but the best games are invariably those that consciously eschew technological innovation in favour of pure, unadulterated gameplay. And it's a lesson that has underpinned every game that DMA Design has worked on.

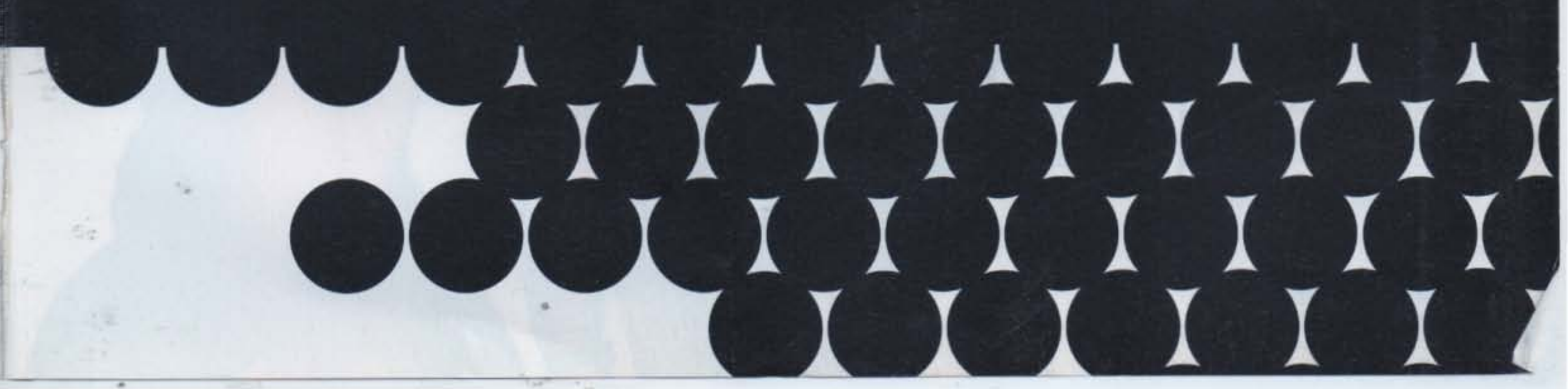
With its diminutive, unassuming visuals, rough-and-ready controls and witty cultural reference points, the company's latest game, *Grand Theft Auto*, sails into the winds of the current videogame development climate, revealing the Amiga-honed origins of its creator's craft with refreshing honesty. A timely contrast is provided by one of the most ambitious attempts at exploiting today's technology – *Colony Wars*. While by no means a failure, Psygnosis' title (see page 83) represents the populist vision of what a 32bit game should be about, with lavish prerendered CGI, rich audio, and stunning-looking battle scenes – and yet there is a void where thoughtful, involving gameplay should be.

What makes the difference between a great videogame and the legions of stylish but ultimately vacuous experiences out there is the amount of consideration given to the player. Fundamentally, and perhaps most relevant to DMA, is that it is passion that makes a great game, not technology. Hopefully the success that *Grand Theft Auto* so richly deserves (providing the censors don't stand in its way) will give just reason for other developers to rediscover a sometimes forgotten art.

This issue Edge presents its third free preview-based CD (*Win 95* only), showcasing the cream of games in development for the PlayStation, N64 and PC, including...



Metal Gear Solid	(PlayStation)
Resident Evil 2	(PlayStation)
Gran Turismo	(PlayStation)
Tomb Raider 2	(PlayStation)
Felony 11-79	(PlayStation)
TOCA Touring Car	(PlayStation)
Diddy Kong Racing	(Nintendo 64)
Top Gear Rally	(Nintendo 64)
Ganbare Goemon	(Nintendo 64)
Mischief Makers	(Nintendo 64)
GoldenEye	(Nintendo 64)
Baku Bomberman	(Nintendo 64)
GP Legends	(PC)
Screamer Rally	(PC)



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Formata light/**regular**/**medium**/**bold**
Vectora light/**bold/black**
AmoebiaSans & **Impact**
Fifth colours: Pantone® 8580/877



GRAND THEFT AUTO 68

DMA Design's first product for what seems like an eternity proves its worth as one of the most original – and entertaining – games in years

TOMB RAIDER 2 72

No radical departure from the winning formula, but a game destined for the number one slot

GIRL TROUBLE 62

The very interpretation of female game characters changed forever when Lara Croft first strode across gamers' screens. But has the industry since pushed the theme beyond breaking point? **Edge** investigates



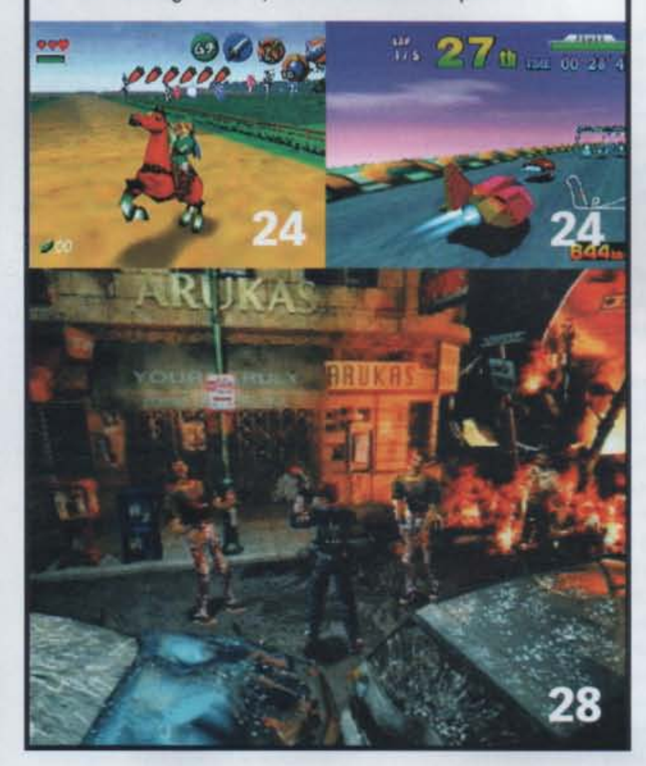
TESTSCREEN

The most authoritative reviews of the hottest UK and import games



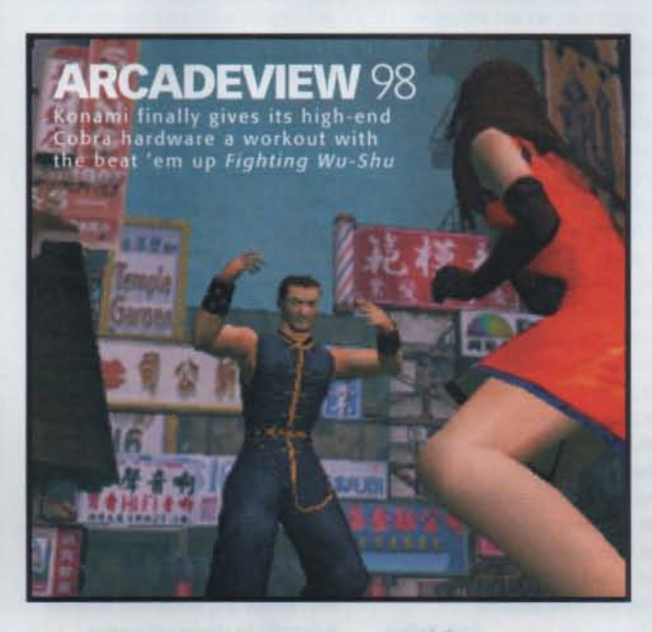
PRESCREEN 24

Focusing on the titles set to illuminate gamers' lives in the coming months; Nintendo sets the pace...



ARCADEVIEW 98

Konami finally gives its high-end Cobra hardware a workout with the beat 'em up *Fighting Wu-Shu*





REDLEMON 60

Edge visits a newly formed codeshop – put together by individuals who made their names at Gremlin – with a refreshing outlook on games

VIEWPOINT

EXPRESS YOURSELF IN **EDGE** – WRITE TO: LETTERS, **EDGE**, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW (EMAIL: edge@futurenet.co.uk)

Having been a reader of **Edge** since the early days – we're talking pre-3DO here – I thought it was about time you printed a glossary of terms for new readers so they may understand your articles better. Here are some suggestions:
'**Edge** *had exclusive access*' – We had to bribe them to let us see it.
'The game is in a very early stage of development' – It looked crap.
'The game is only 50% complete' – It still looks crap.
'The game is almost 90% complete' – They've finished the title screen.
'The Japanese version is complete' – They'll get around to starting the PAL version next year, perhaps.
'It looked like a 16bit game' – The game wasn't in 3D.
'It played like a 16bit game' – It was 3D, but we still didn't like it.
'The game was far too hard' – The reviewer was unable to complete it in his lunch break.
'The PC version is a lot better than the PlayStation equivalent' – **Edge**'s PC is worth £20,000.
'The Saturn version looked quite good' – We were pissed at the time.
'Some compromises were made on the N64 version' – Half the levels were lost, it had mono sound, and the lead character, Bernard the Brain Eater, was replaced with Mario.
'To appreciate this game at its best you'll need at least a 200MHz Pentium with 32Mb RAM and a 3D card' – It won't work on your PC. Ha, ha, ha.
'Nintendo believes quality is superior to quantity' – It has hardly any games.
'**Edge** *has never been prejudiced against any machine*' – We knackered the Jaguar big-style.
'**Edge** *never displays bias towards any machine*' – Nobody has ever offered us any bribes.
'Nintendo has always had the edge in terms of originality' – It adds the suffix '64' to all its old games.
'The PAL version will be lightly censored' – All the best bits will be cut.
'The game makes best use of CD-ROM' – There are three hours of FMV.
'The game lacks originality' – It's a PlayStation game.
'The game is full of originality' – It's an N64 game.
'A Saturn version is on the cards' – The Saturn version has been cancelled.
'The frame rate occasionally drops below 10fps' – It's a PC game.

Disclaimer: I love all consoles, magazines and people who read/play etc, so don't moan about this letter!

Mark Hall, London

'Thanks for the amusing letter' – Consider yourself lucky that your misguided missive was printed.

I am beginning to wonder if I still buy your magazine for any other reason than to get wound up every month. I can't believe you will not give the PlayStation the credit it deserves.

In response to Kenneth Henry (**E**51) you say the N64's tiny range has more inspired and innovative software than the entire Sony range. *Turok*? *Goldeneye*? *Star Fox*? *Mario Kart*? All fantastic games, but original and innovative? We're talking about first-person shoot 'em ups or 64bit makeovers of the SNES back catalogue.

I know you'll defend the undoubted progress and advances made by these titles, but it is easier to improve on a game that already exists, with established and familiar characters and proven gameplay, than to start from scratch. *Mario 64* is undoubtedly one of the best games ever, but how many times have we seen the fat plumber before?

I accept that a high proportion of the PS catalogue is crap, but who has bought them all? I'd argue that owning a PS at the moment means you can obtain quality titles from just about any game genre, more so than for any other gaming platform. It's an accepted fact that millions more people have a PS than any other console. But still it seems you think we've all fallen for clever marketing and the right image, rather than quality and choice of well-priced software. Are we all that shallow and easily pleased?

Andy Talbot, via email

No, but there are large number of unwitting consumers that are. How else would you explain the dismal *The Lost World* hogging the number one spot recently? The point **Edge** has been making in recent months doesn't dispute that the PlayStation has some excellent games, but merely highlights the excess of lacklustre titles. New arrivals titles such as *Grand Theft Auto*, *Tomb Raider 2*, *Final Fantasy VII* and *Castlevania* will go some way to improve the situation, though.

Videogames have come a long way since the first *Pong* machine and thankfully I have been there to witness its development. But it saddens me to see an industry once booming with originality and possibilities being choked by the very people who claim to be making these oh-so-great technological advancements. Yes, I am talking about Nintendo, Sega and Sony.

Take a step into the past when the Commodore 64 was the king of the mountain. Here we had a gameplayer's dream, a machine that was not only advanced for its time but one you could program games for, and if you were serious enough about it, get them published fairly easily. Originality and playability were the key elements and these games weren't governed by censorship or development costs, there was no hype, and their development was guided by the desire to create pure fun. Sure, piracy was a problem, but I think a lot of coders got satisfaction just from knowing people were playing and enjoying their games.

But now it's 1997 and everyone is saying how the industry has matured. Rubbish. We have no user-friendly machine to write for – no Commodore 64 with which to cut our teeth. Sure, there is the PC, but that is very expensive. Not only that, it is marketed as a business machine. A lot of young gamers find the PC confusing and tend to shy away from it.

So who would create a machine giving us our Commodore 64 for the '90s? Not Nintendo. Can you imagine the revenue they would lose from not being able to charge extravagant cartridge-duplication prices? Piracy would again be a problem, of course, but isn't it still now? I know it is possible to buy a cart copier called Doctor 64 and that copied PS games are widely available.

Perhaps Amstrad could do something for us. Maybe we should even give Mr Sinclair a call and he could give us a Spectrum to lead us into the millennium (joke).

Brad Taylor, Australia

The C64 was initially introduced a home business and educational system (remember the ads telling how dad could manage the accounts and mum could do her recipes?) and it took a while before programmers discovered its suite of game-friendly custom hardware. You make a valid point, though, and opinion is divided on whether the games market will ever see a situation like this develop again. Expect an in-depth look at this soon.

Was it the momentum gained by **Edge** when it jumped onto the anti-sequel bandwagon that caused it to miss the point of my letter (**E**51) so fantastically? Or did I make the point too subtly? Either way I get the impression that whoever read the letter had already drawn their conclusion halfway through, completely ignoring my last paragraph.

In any case, I would like to set the record straight by spelling out the point I was making. The Saturn's position in the industry as the gamer's games machine gives Sega a good deal of clout for the next round of hardware releases. If it can combine this with a killer marketing campaign that can rival the awesome spectacle that Sony's audacious debut created, then it stands a good chance of occupying a dominant position. I thought the sarcastic tone I employed clearly stated my view that sequels were not the way for Sony to succeed.

I hope that **Edge** will not fall back on its usual standby of answering this letter with the '**Edge** has hardly jumped on the anti-sequel bandwagon...' ploy, but will answer the question of whether my last letter was too subtle, or was it **Edge** missing the point? Can **Edge** admit being in the wrong for once?

James Holloway, via email

Sorry, **Edge** must have missed the point. Hey, savour the moment...

I have been reading **Edge** for over a year now and enjoy its emphasis on development. However, I have a suggestion for future articles. Perhaps you could run a series on how to program a basic game on the PC, maybe just a simple *Mario Kart* clone. These articles could run over the course of a year in a supplement, perhaps. I sure that there would be a lot of interest and perhaps it would pull in a wider audience. I know that when I started to code I'd have found something like that very useful. If not that then at least enlarge your Develop section. This idea is not new – the old Amiga magazines had tons of tutorials on programming. Perhaps you would like to consider the idea.

Nathan Matthews, via email

Edge is reluctant to start technical tutorials because justice simply couldn't be done to the subject within the limited resources available. But the Develop section will endeavour to report on software developments, easing the access of inexperienced programmers to the industry.

After much hype concerning the Sony analogue pad, I decided to take my local games retailer's advice and purchase the official UK release, as this might be a more affordable choice than an import. After opening the package and performing the well-known massage on its analogue controller, I plugged it into my PlayStation and loaded *Rally Cross*.

Guess what? No response from the so-called vibrating feedback. On contacting my retailer, who in turn contacted his supplier, I was informed that support for this feature had been removed from the European version. I feel very cheated in this respect as support for this game was a crucial factor in my decision to purchase the controller. I hope you can tell me what Sony plans to do about it.

On the package it says that design and specification are subject to change; I expected colour, or other minor cosmetic changes, but not the removal of one of the fundamental features.

The analogue pad does enhance the software titles compatible with it, but I can't help feeling that the British gaming public have been short-changed by Sony not including the rumble feature on UK releases.

Steve Hardy, via email

There are several schools of thought regarding Sony's decision to drop the vibrating mechanism, and these range from disputed reliability and compatibility to issues of cost. Whatever, it was agreed that the effect paled slightly when compared with the N64's Rumble Pak and that Sony has been more concerned with making sure as many developers as possible elected to support the analogue controls while keeping the manufacturing cost of the unit down.

I thought that false advertising was an offence, but the more I look, the more examples I find. Here are just a few...

1. On TV shows, they always seem to show the import versions of the games they are supposedly reviewing.
2. Adverts, like the one for *Mario Kart 64*, show the NTSC full-screen version.
3. EA had a playable version of PS *The Lost World* at my local cinema. It crashed, and when an usher reset it, the loading screen said 'Licensed by Sony Computer Entertainment America'. It was the NTSC version!
4. The computer press often reviews the PAL version of a game, but prints pictures from the import version.
5. My local Dixons has (or had) the NTSC version of *PilotWings 64* running in its window display.

Shoddy PAL conversions now have more chance of success, thanks to the incompetence of the computer press and some retailers. I wonder how many people have been taken in?

Neil McAlister, Kent

When the Super Nintendo was advertised in late 1993, a complaint was upheld that forced Nintendo to replace NTSC footage of certain titles with the proper PAL equivalent. These days, with fewer differences between PAL and NTSC titles, it's more likely that NTSC versions were used in the circumstances you describe because PAL versions were not complete.



Edge's third interactive preview disc features a selection of titles for the Nintendo 64, PlayStation and PC as well as interactive music, Japanese advertising and state-of-the-art CGI. The disc is *Windows 95*-compatible only.

How to run the CD

Most of the video clips included on CD3 use Eidos' *Escape* video compression software. This allows high-quality playback at 25fps although places certain demands upon the hardware. To get the most from this disc you will need at least a Pentium 90 with 16Mb of RAM, a quad-speed drive and *Windows 95*. **Edge** recommends a machine with 32Mb of RAM and an 8-speed CD drive for optimum performance, and regrets that Macintosh-compatible files will not be made available available until CD4 – currently planned to be given away free with issue 54.

To run the CD you will first need to set your PC to 16bit colour. To do this, click on the *Windows 95* desktop to bring up the 'display properties' window. Now go to 'settings' in the menu bar, choose 16bit and then reboot your PC.

Escape employs Microsoft's Direct X libraries and anyone without Direct X installed on their machine will need to boot up the CD from the desktop (by clicking on the edge.exe file in the CD folder) and choose to install Direct X. Then, reboot your machine and boot up CD3.

NuMedia – Chillas demo

Modified's *Chillas* demo is a fully playable 40Mb extract from the full 600Mb version (available now from www.modified.com for £15.99) featuring 60 drum'n'bass samples arranged across 8 channels and mixed in realtime along with full-screen videographic mayhem. New breakbeats can be called in by hitting the button at the bottom of screen. New washes, backgrounds and voices are accessible by clicking anywhere else on screen. The demo will auto-compose its own selections if left to its own devices...

For speed and full effect, the demo is best viewed at 640x480 in 256 colours. Other modes work too but will be slower.



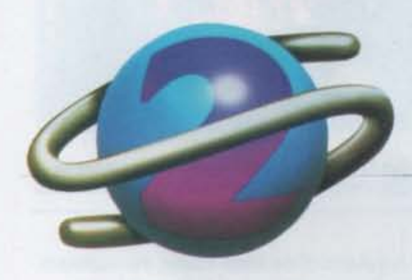


Gaming highlights from CD3: Rare's Nintendo 64 driving game, *Diddy Kong Racing* (left), and Konami's ambitious PlayStation title, *Metal Gear Solid*

Cutting Edge

Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge Cutting Edge

The latest news from the world of interactive entertainment



SATURN 2 SPECS FINALLY UNEARTHED

The true specifications of Sega's successor to the Saturn, taken from development manuals, have finally been uncovered. Known as Dural (previously Black Belt and Dragon), the current technological set-up is sufficiently powerful to comfortably eclipse the current consoles from Sony and Nintendo.

The machine, currently scheduled to appear in Japan in Autumn 1998, has been developed in conjunction with several influential partners, Microsoft's input possibly being the most crucial. The US giant developed the WinCE Operating System which is believed to make the Dural simple to program as well as allowing the development of non-game utilities.

Other manufacturers include Hitachi, which is supplying the Dural's SH-4 CPU; NEC, which engineers the PowerVR2 graphics chip; and Yamaha, with its ARM7 sound chip. The 'revelation' that Sega has opted to use PowerVR2 technology is hardly news – speculation of this first started after reports of the company's decision to ditch 3Dfx's offering (see **E**49), followed by Sega advising Dural software developers who had not yet received their first-phase development kit to start developing with a Pentium-based PC with a PowerVR card in place.

Final development systems are planned to reach developers by the end of February 1998. Nevertheless, given the proposed release date, this leaves programmers with little time to fully exploit the machine's potential.

The Dural's technological centrepiece, the SH-4, was first announced at the Microprocessor Forum in October 1996, and even back then speculation arose as to its possible use in videogames. Production of the 200MHz chip is expected to begin soon. The SH-4 is backed up with the PowerVR2 in charge of the graphical side of the proceedings. At present, 1.5 million polygons per second, mip-mapping, texture filtering and hardware fogging is promised. While on the face of it such specs would make Dural more powerful than Sega's own Model 3 board, these numbers are unlikely to be a realistic gauge of the system's performance. In theory, its support of both OpenGL and D3D should make ports to and from the PC relatively straightforward. Sonically, Yamaha's ARM7 is capable of outputting 64 simultaneous voices, and also boasts a multitude of DSP effects.

Like the Saturn, Sega's next machine will be CD-based, but will use an unusual 12-speed dual-density Yamaha CD-ROM drive which will read regular discs as well as Dural-specific 1Gig high-density versions. Modem compatibility is also promised, although it has not been specified whether this will come as standard or become available as a subsequent add-on.

In the Japanese press, Sega has so far refused to confirm any of the specifications published in the west, while, in customary fashion, Japanese publications have abstained from reproducing any specifications, limiting themselves to reporting 'no-show' interviews instead.

Curiously, pictures originating from Japan allegedly depicting Sega's next platform are currently circulating on the Internet.

The few shots showing the grey console (similar in places to a laterally squashed PlayStation) from a variety of angles are accompanied by a technical breakdown that doesn't match the aforementioned specs. While these may have been leaked concepts for the original Dural, it is more likely they are the result of an elaborate hoax.

Whatever the case, Sega's next machine may be more than a year away from launch but it's clear that speculation and anticipation are already rife. **E**

DURAL SPECS
CPU:
Hitachi SH-4 200 MHz
Graphics chip:
PowerVR2
Sound chip:
Yamaha ARM7-based ASIC
Main RAM:
8 megabytes
Video/texture RAM:
8 megabytes
Audio RAM:
2 megabytes
CACHES:
8K instruction/16K data/128K CD-ROM buffer
MODEM:
Modem card (possibly PCMCIA based)
OUTPUT:
VGA and 640x240 anti-aliased RF
CD-ROM:
Custom dual format

While on the face of it such specs would make Dural **more powerful than Model 3,** these numbers are unlikely to be realistic



The lead design work for Dural is being undertaken at Sega's Japanese HQ in Ohta-ku





Japanese Saturn 2 'design docs' posted to an online gaming site: a hoax or the real thing?

NINTENDO CUTS CART COSTS

In what appears to be a desperate attempt to secure a wider market share in the run up to Christmas, Nintendo of America has announced further price cuts to N64 software titles. The reduction comes after Nintendo of Japan slashed the manufacturing costs for all thirdparty titles entering the production line. New software releases in the US will now retail from $49 to $59 – up to $20 less than before.

The new pricing scheme came into effect from October 15, and all eyes will be on the sales figures for *Diddy Kong Racing* and *Bomberman 64*, the first titles to benefit from the price reduction. Other pre-Christmas titles expected to fit into the lower pricepoint include *San Francisco Rush*, *Extreme-G*, *Madden 64*, *NFL Quarterback Club '98* and *F1 Pole Position*.

Stagnant demand for both hardware and software is thought to be a prime motivator behind the cuts. The outrageous expense of 64bit titles compared to those on 32bit platforms was the subject of much criticism and (more importantly) consumer apathy, resulting in few N64 owners buying or receiving more than one game last Christmas. Cheaper software means N64 games now compare favourably with PlayStation titles, equipping Nintendo with sufficient ammunition to take on Sony during this festive season.

Another beneficial result of the price cuts should come in the form of wider thirdparty support. The response amongst such developers – many of whom had previously been reticent to accept the financial risk of committing to full-scale cart production – has been highly positive. When asked to comment by the online service of **Edge**'s sister magazine *Next Generation*, **Bill Gardner**, president of Capcom Entertainment, was enthusiastic about the news.

'We're wildly ecstatic. It was unreasonable to look at Nintendo 64 from a thirdparty publisher's standpoint previously,' said Gardner. 'Now there is room for everyone to make money, and to bring more games to the system.'

The UK has witnessed an even bigger price reduction, with new titles promised to retail at less than £50. Considering the PlayStation's domination of the British market, this represents a crucial and highly competitive move on Nintendo's part. Furthermore, there are plans to reintroduce older titles such as *Mario Kart 64* at a cheaper price point, expected to be £40.

No details have been confirmed regarding a US or UK hardware price reduction, although analysts are predicting the N64 will drop to $99 (£65) in the US shortly. Should this occur, it will happen simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, with a £99 price equivalent in the UK. Sony has acted quickly to counter this move, introducing a Value Pack to tempt potential UK PlayStation buyers; in addition to the machine itself, customers will get two joypads and a memory card to get them going, all for the usual console-only price of £130.

Meanwhile, over in the southern hemisphere, Nintendo has officially dropped the price of the N64 to Aus$199 (£90), while in France – where strangely enough the N64 has only just launched – the machine costs just £100. So it's official, then. The UK is now the most expensive place in the world to buy a Nintendo 64. Hopefully not for long. E



The initiative is intended to bring cart prices more in line with CDs – something that is certain to boost sales

Game Boy guru dies

On Saturday October 4, 1997, Gumpei Yokoi, the genius inventor behind some of Nintendo's most successful products, died, aged 53, after a tragic road accident.

After shunting his car into the rear of another vehicle near his native Kyoto, Yokoi and his passenger stepped from their vehicle to inspect the damage. The driver of a passing vehicle accidentally hit the pair. While his associate sustained only minor wounding, Yokoi was terminally injured. Within two hours he was declared dead at a local hospital.

From his early work with products such as the Game & Watch series to the overwhelming success of the Game Boy, Yokoi's skill with electronic entertainment was unmatched. He left Nintendo last August after the failure of the Virtual Boy and went on to set up his own enterprise, the Koto company.

Edge would like to express its condolences to Gumpei Yokoi's family and friends. He leaves behind an unforgettable legacy of innovations that touched the lives of millions the world over.







UK price reductions could eventually see N64 units retailing at £100, while a sub-£50 price is expected for *Diddy Kong Racing* (above left). Nintendo may also re-introduce some of its older titles, such as *Mario Kart 64*, at £40

cutting edge cuttings

Mario mashes movies
According to Nintendo, nearly 2.5 million units of *Super Mario 64* have been sold in North America. Grossing sales of around $150m, it seems the world's squattest plumber has what it takes to outsell Hollywood's finest. Even the Julia Roberts blockbuster 'My Best Friend's Wedding' could only muster a mere $121m by comparison.

Tamagotcha
In what many will see as a bizarre move, officials at Ho Chi Minh City airport have been seizing Tamagotchi pets from tourists visiting Vietnam. One report quotes an airport staff member as saying, 'It is a harmful game that separates children, and even adults, from their normal life.' Much like an over-bearing patriarchal state, then.

Dungeon teacher?
Bullfrog has released a patch for *Dungeon Keeper*, apparently because the team behind the game weren't 100% happy with its AI, something the patch corrects. The 1.5Mb file also installs 'Creature re-balancing', apparently. The direct path to reach the file on the Net is as follows: www.bullfrog.co.uk/dungeon_keeper/dkpatch.zip

NINTENDO PREPARES FOR 64DD SHOWCASE





The biggest 64DD-compatible title is *Mother 3* (top), although Nintendo is known to be also working on a completely new 64DD-only version of *Zelda 64*

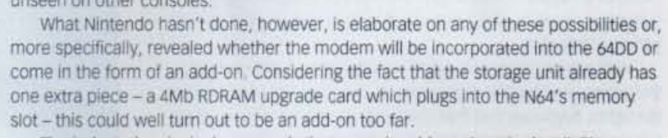
Nintendo is set to make the official unveiling of its widely anticipated 64DD storage device the key event at this year's Shoshinkai show, which has recently been renamed Nintendo World. There is still a plethora of unanswered questions surrounding the peripheral, which has been the subject of raging controversies within the games industry. It is believed that all will be made clear at the three-day event – including the Japanese launch date, which currently stands at 'sometime in early '98'.

Perhaps most importantly, though, industry gossip has it that at least four 64DD games will be previewed at the show, including the epic RPG *Mother 3*. The reception granted to this sequel to the Super Famicom classic (known as *Earthbound* in the west) is sure to prove vital to the success of the storage unit – not only because of the popularity of the genre, but also because the game is apparently huge, and should be an effective demonstration of the 64DD disks' speed and storage capacity. Nintendo is no doubt still reeling from the loss of SquareSoft from its Dream Team and the massive success of *Final Fantasy VII* on the PlayStation, and therefore will want to show that titles of similarly epic scale are in fact possible on the N64. Furthermore, *Earthbound* also makes use of the 64DD's realtime clock, which allows game worlds to continue changing and evolving even when the user is not playing.

Other titles due to premiere at the show are perhaps less interesting. *Mario Paint 64* is essentially an update of the ancient SNES curiosity, but will make use of the writeable potential of the 64DD's discs to allow users to save their works of art. Meanwhile, *Pocket Monsters 64* is a Tamagotchi-tinted title, and *Sim City 2000* is merely a conversion of the venerable PC classic. Curiously, *The Legend of Zelda 64* hasn't figured in pre-show rumours and speculation, but is almost certain to make an appearance – if only in the form of a running demo or video preview.

Away from the software, however, there are other questions waiting to be answered. In April of this year, Nintendo boss Hiroshi Yamauchi confirmed in an interview with Asia Week magazine that a modem would make up part of the 64DD plan. But what part exactly? Nintendo has often claimed that the 64DD will include a communications facility enabling gamers to download extra levels and characters from some central game server. If this is possible, it would be an excellent means of lengthening the lifespan of a title. The company has also hinted at the possibility of online gaming, or at least person-to-person gaming via a modem link – again offering a further level of playability unseen on other consoles.





What Nintendo hasn't done, however, is elaborate on any of these possibilities or, more specifically, revealed whether the modem will be incorporated into the 64DD or come in the form of an add-on. Considering the fact that the storage unit already has one extra piece – a 4Mb RDRAM upgrade card which plugs into the N64's memory slot – this could well turn out to be an add-on too far.

The industry's principal concern is that console add-ons just don't sell. The precedent has been set by a number of crucial failures and embarrassments such as the 32X, the Jaguar CD, and more recently Sega's own Netlink – the latter offered similar online possibilities to the 64DD but failed to wholly convince Saturn owners of its worthiness. Many thirdparty developers are already wary of the N64's cartridge costs, so a further format is bound to be looked on with trepidation. For their own part, N64 owners will hardly be jumping for joy at the prospect of further expense.

It is vital, then, that Nintendo uses the Nintendo World show to makes its 64DD objectives clear. The device has the potential to be a revolutionary online gaming peripheral in addition to its primary goal – that of upping the N64's storage capacity and offering unique save-data opportunities. But any further vagaries and half-revelations could propel 'floating' developers and consumers into the grasp of Sony and Sega which are, of course, preparing their own plans.

64DD tech



The 64DD is a supplementary storage device that fits into the expansion slot on the base of the N64. The proprietary 64Mb discs are similar in overall size to standard 3.5" floppies, but are roughly twice as thick. It has an average seek time of 150ms and a data transfer rate of 1Mb/sec (equivalent to a 6x CD-ROM drive).





The 64DD debuted at last year's Shoshinkai event in Japan

Resident Evil 2 warning

Retailers in America are being warned by Capcom not to show the demo of *Resident Evil 2* to kids. The extra CD, which accompanies the recently released *Director's Cut* version of the first game, carries an 'M' (mature) rating in the States, which will undoubtedly attract children like bees to a honeypot.

Don't rock the boat...

Another group of 3D Realms employees have departed the company to set up on their own. Still based in Dallas, Rebel Boat Rockers has already signed its new 3D shooting title to Electronic Arts. With members of the team having worked on *Civilization* and *Duke Nukem*, the codeshop should have a pretty varied output.

Adios Eidos

As suspected following the exclusive console licensing of *Tomb Raider 2* to the PlayStation, Eidos has announced that it will no longer be developing any more titles for the Saturn. The desertion of the Saturn by one-time Sega ally Core strikes a serious blow to the machine in the run-up to the crucial Christmas period.

Is Capcom taking the Mickey?

In a recent interview in Japan, Capcom's Noritaka Funamizu revealed that the company's first Nintendo 64 title would feature Disney characters in a *Tetris*-style puzzle environment. A revamp of the long-running *Mega Man* games, in which the eponymous hero will make the leap into the third dimension, will follow it.

continued

QUAKE PREPARES TO **STORM ARCADES**



The *Quake* coin-op will be considerably better than this standard PC version, and will actually deduct one health point from the player every two seconds

American companies Quantum 3D, Hyperware and id Software have announced an arcade version of *Quake*. Running at 60fps, the coin-op will use a 266Mhz Pentium 2 in conjunction with a high-end Obsidian 3Dfx card. More interesting is the news that the game will be primarily controlled by trackball, with ancillary buttons to strafe, look, run and shoot.

Although arcade *Quake* will be available as a singleplayer cabinet, its manufacturer is hoping that the relatively low cost of the unit (US$6,000) will encourage the purchase of the multiplayer version. Up to four players will able to take part in deathmatches in this format, the action being controlled by proprietary SparkyNet software running on a *Windows NT* system. SparkyNet is not exclusively designed for id's game, though: special arcade versions of *Shadow Warrior* and *Duke Nukem 3D* are already in the pipeline. Once units are installed across America (and, presumably, the rest of the world), it is hoped that players will be able to compete against contestants in completely separate arcades. Coin-op *Quake* could be a valuable tool in demonstrating to the world just how important online gaming is set to be.

*Quake*meisters will be shocked to learn that item locations have been changed in order to prevent newcomers from getting slaughtered in the first few seconds of play in deathmatch mode.

To catch the attention of passing arcade fans, the multiplayer version will be available with a top-mounted monitor, showing off the game in play.

With work on Intel's Open Arcade Architecture program also continuing apace, Bill Gates' vision of Wintel systems dominating the arcades no longer looks like a dream.



SEGA PREPARES FOR **CASH** AS **PATENT** CLEARS

In a move that has shocked the Japanese games industry, Sega Enterprises was finally awarded a patent on August 22 which the company originally applied for in June 1992. The patent covers the 3D technology in games which allows for moving camera angles, such as the multiple views in *Virtua Racer* and *Daytona USA*. Sega could be due over $13m in royalty payments from companies that include Namco and Konami. According to Japanese financial paper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, the fee could be 'several per cent' of an arcade machine's price. Given the proliferation of the technology in driving games, Sega will be looking to several concerns to pay up.

The patenting of intangible concepts in videogames could prove to a major issue over the next few years. As technology converges, it will be ideas and not machines that win the day for games companies.

With any products developed outside Japan not covered by the patent, and several companies declaring an intent to contest the rights, Sega may find that collecting the money it feels owed proves to be more trouble than it's worth. Certainly, with corporate legal bills often liable to run into millions of pounds, any company contesting Sega's claims may find the case is simply dropped.

In a related case in the States, claims made against Nintendo by American electronics giant General Electric have finally been dismissed. The company's allegations centred around its belief that Nintendo had infringed some patents that General Electric held, which covered certain types of electrical circuitry in televisions.

In his 150-page summary, Judge Alfred Wolin stated that the big N's products were 'a lightning bolt of interest.' It seems that Mario has fans in some very high places...







Sega pioneered its mobile camera system in *Virtua Racing* (left) and *Daytona* (above). Its patent now holds in Japan where royalties will no doubt be sought

continued

Micro Machines hits 64

Among a batch of titles recently announced by Midway for release on the N64 in the US, one title stands out: CodeMasters' *Micro Machines*. Having previously made the leap to polygons on the PlayStation, the game is in the progress of conversion to Nintendo's machine – a spokesperson for CodeMasters confirmed this to **Edge**, but was unable to give a more specific release date than late 1998.

Orbital roadworks

In a move that has raised a few eyebrows, Accolade has managed to sign Orbital to supply one of the music tracks for the latest incarnation of *Test Drive*. Also signed are The Younger Younger 28's, the new group formed by the ex-lead signer of the Little Angels, Jimmy Dickinson. **Edge** can't help but worry about how easily these two musical genres will sit together in the finished product...

Back to school

ASCII has announced a new PlayStation title, *RPG School 3*, which allows players to create their own RPG titles. A UK release isn't expected.

Padding softly

Sony has released another version of its Japan-only vibrating analogue pad, now featuring two levels of vibration rather than simply one. The 'Dual Shock' is out now priced ¥3,300 (£16).

GTI SNAPS UP MICROPROSE FOR $200M

At the beginning of October 1997, after undergoing a subtle renaming process, Microprose, Inc. was purchased by GT Interactive.

The $200m deal makes GTI the second-largest games company in America, after Electronic Arts. It's a measure of the scale of the modern videogames industry that GT Interactive (with Microprose combined) needs a turnover of $500m to reach second place. One of the first direct effects of the merger will be the conversion of many Microprose titles to the various console formats. Some of the most valued of the company's PC products are *Star Trek: First Contact*, *Battletech: MechCommander*, *Magic: The Gathering – Spells of the Ancients*, and *Falcon 4.0*.

Less than a week prior to the announcement the board of Spectrum Holobyte, Microprose's holding company, had voted overwhelmingly to change the company's name to that of its subsidiary. At that time CEO **Steve Race** claimed that the move was in order to, 'Unify the marketing efforts of the company behind not only a brand name, but a company name reflecting the company's brand image.' While at the time that may have rung true, the move made a lot more sense a week later.

Notably, only three days after the deal with GT Interactive, Microprose, Inc. announced losses of between $1.6m and $2.3m for the second quarter ending September 30, putting the blame firmly at the door of poor European sales.

Its amalgamation into the burgeoning GT Interactive stable will enable Microprose to make use of the larger company's extensive distribution network. In many ways the situation echoes that which has prevailed in the music industry for some time, where 'independent' labels need the backing of a larger company to ensure products reach to the consumer in the most cost-effective way possible. Whether this apparently inexorable change is for the better remains to be seen.



ACCLAIM CODESHOPS LOSE KEY STAFF

Akklaim entertainment, inc.

Key staff at two of Acclaim's development houses, Probe and Sculptured, have reportedly left.

Most surprising is the news that brothers Fergus and Kevin McGovern have left Probe, the company they were instrumental in founding back in 1984 (see **E**47), although at the time of press their reasons for leaving remain unclear.

When Probe was sold by Fergus McGovern, a large proportion of the payment consisted of Acclaim stock – something which may complicate his departure. With several Probe titles nearing completion, including *Extreme-G* (see page 40), it could be that the brothers seized upon a natural gap in development to move on. Acclaim has so far denied the story, however, claiming a statement will be issued, 'when changes are complete'.

More definite is the news that Sculptured Software's co-founder, George Metos, and its vice-president of development, Kelly Zmack, have left the company to set up a new venture. In the wake of their leaving, Sculptured has undergone a name change to become Iguana West, and is now run by Peter Suarez from Iguana. Whether Metos' new company will be affiliated to Acclaim is unclear, although, interestingly, it is believed that he will be taking two projects with him – *Stratosphere* (a realtime strategy game) and an off-road racing game with the working title of *Baja*.

For a company that had been in a creative and financial rut prior to its acquisition of Probe, Iguana and Sculptured, Acclaim's loss of such key staff could be seen as either inevitable or disappointing.

After the recent departures of many renowned individuals from large software companies, this new series of movements only furthers the notion that creative freedom does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with heavily cash-fuelled, multi-layered organisations.



***Shadowman* is perhaps Iguana UK's biggest title for Acclaim. Will it be affected by the recent disruption?**

Turok reaches the Net

With the finished version nearing completion, Acclaim has posted a working demo of its N64 masterpiece, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, for PCs running 3Dfx accelerator cards. Featuring smooth, beautifully filtered graphics that improve on those of the original, the only downside is that the file represents an 8.3Mb download. Dedicated PC owners unafraid of running up monstrous telephone bills should direct their browsers to www.aklm.com

Naming names

Following Nintendo's rather poor renaming of *Star Fox 64* to *Lylat Wars* in Europe, Activision has decided to get in on the act. The company has opted to re-title the PlayStation version of its PC hit *Interstate '76* with the significantly less hip moniker *Vigilante 8*. So much for brand awareness, then.

Dragging on

While certain parts of videogaming history deserve to be cherished and preserved, others should be allowed to gracefully fade away. Unfortunately, no one seems to have told Canadian company Digital Leisure, as it is preparing to foist the decidedly gameplay-lite *Dragon's Lair* upon the fledgling DVD format. Considering the game exemplified everything that was wrong with the interactive movie concept, **Edge** truly despairs.

(out there)

REPORTAGE FROM THE PERIPHERY OF THE VIDEOGAMES INDUSTRY

Eidos tempts fantasy team

Eidos recently paid a visit to Wembley along with a bevy of top football stars to promote its latest *Championship Manager* sequel, catchily titled *Championship Manager Season 97/98*. Among the 11 prestigious names wheeled out to promote the title were Chelsea hardman Mark Hughes, England defender Tony Adams, and injury-prone Liverpool pretty-boy Jamie Redknapp – who, due to the knock he picked up at the England vs South Africa friendly last Summer, has been forced to spend the last few months at home with pop vixen fiancée Louise. Never has a man been so glad to be savagely fouled.

A press release which accompanied the Eidos publicity stunt cooed, 'Some of the country's top players lined up on the pitch at Wembley to show their support for the world's most famous football management game'. Noble sentiments, but **Edge** suspects the country's top players would have lined up to show their support for bear baiting if a sufficient wedge of cash was waved at them. Which, considering the chunky gold bracelet Redknapp was wielding throughout the affair, might well have been the case…



License? What license?



Psygnosis has run into a legal dispute with Formula One Administration Limited (FOA) and motor sport governing body Federation Internationale de L'Automobile (FIA) over its massively successful title *F1 '97*. It appears that the company felt negotiations over the use of the FIA logo were drawing to a satisfactory close and so went ahead and released the game. However, the FOA claimed that no rights had been granted, prompting an argument which has forced Psygnosis to withdraw the offending logo from its *F1 '97* boxes. The title has now been re-released, apparently with no in-game changes.

On a lighter note, Melinda Messenger – who has recently carried out promotional work for the Jordan racing team – was present at the launch of the game. The *Sun* 'stunna' posed with two Jordan-liveried PlayStations, but unfortunately very few people noticed. Two other silicone-packed products drew most of the attention.

Media go mental over Postal

Recently released shoot 'em up *Postal* is the latest videogame to incur the judgmental wrath of the British media. The title, published in the UK by Take 2 Interactive and developed in America by the little-known codeshop RipCord, sees the player taking control of a gun-toting maniac who must blast his way through 16 scenarios using a variety of weapons, like *Doom*; but here the action is viewed from a third-person perspective, the setting is rural Texas, and the victims are often just passers-by caught in the crossfire. When shot, these unfortunate souls crawl along the ground in agony, trailing gobbets of blood.

And it doesn't stop there. The US version also featured sections in which the gunman wanders through a schoolyard, and another where a marching band passes the player, inviting a slaughter. Although these elements have been removed from the European release, the *Sunday Times* recently labelled *Postal* 'the world's most violent video game', and BBFC chairman James Ferman has called for a regulatory body to be set up with the power to ban such games. With *Grand Theft Auto* attracting a similar knee-jerk response, that day is probably not too far away.



Leave that poster alone!



Instead of quietly exploiting the ungodly obsession many gamers have with Lara Croft, Eidos has decided to draw attention to the phenomenon in an ad for *Tomb Raider 2* in the US. The magazine spread features a callow youth slumped beneath a shrine plastered with pictures of the ubiquitous Core character. The copy runs like this: 'Sleep doesn't come easy in room 23. But for 19-year-old Ray Cooper, it has nothing to do with the noise. As he says, "Its because she's all I see every time I close my eyes."'. **Edge** wonders where Ray's descent into madness will lead next – an ad showing him caught in flagrante with a life-size Lara Croft cut-out is probably already in production.

EDGE SINGLES OUT THE WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE INTERMINABLE BATTLE FOR VIDEOGAME CRED

(game on)

Nintendo, for performing such an excellent job with the PAL conversion of *StarFox 64* (under the moniker of *Lylat Wars*), finally giving UK Nintendo 64 owners a premium title with no borders. Who said Nintendo doesn't care about the UK?

BT Wireplay, for, after a shaky start, really beginning to get into its stride, with shit-hot performance and support for outstanding games such as *Total Annihilation*.

Nintendo (again), for realising just how many gamers vote solely with their wallets, and lowering N64 game prices.

The driving forces behind top coin-op emulator **MAME**, for continuing to provide **Edge** with tasty new slices of retro arcade-gaming action on a regular basis. Congratulations.

The **driving game**, for being such a fantastically durable genre, with fresh examples still appearing today.

The **driving game**, for being such a desperately oversubscribed genre. Sorting the wheat from the chaff is getting laborious.

PowerVR, originally the only 3D accelerator set to bring *Resident Evil* to the PC and now the only high-end card whose logo is missing from the back of the game's box.

The US version of **Resident Evil: Director's Cut**, for not delivering on its promise of totally uncensored content. A 'communication breakdown' between departments indeed...

Edge, for making Activision's *Dark Reign* look suspiciously like Take Two's *Dark Colony*. Magazine art staff and 50 new games whose names begin with 'Dark' don't mix well...

Sony's commemorative **one-million-PlayStations-sold plaque** recently received by **Edge**. With its super-smooth glass surface it should come in handy as, er, a coffee table...

(game over)

VIDEOGAMES ON THE EDGE

The games – old, new, whatever – that have brought work to a standstill in the Edge office this month

Resident Evil 2 (PlayStation, *Director's Cut* preview disc)
Although only in demo form, *Resident Evil 2* already proves immensely enjoyable with much-improved visuals and plenty of new surprises. **Edge** eagerly awaits the final product.

TOCA Touring Car Championship (PlayStation, PC 3Dfx beta versions)
The sheer excitement and playability of CodeMasters' PS racer almost convinced **Edge** to overlook its visual inadequacies when compared to the slinky 3D-accelerated PC version.

GunBullet (PlayStation)
Namco's fun and addictive lightgun shooter offers just about the most perfect late-night I'll-just-have-a-quick-shot-on-this-while-you're-doing-those-captions deadline diversion.

GoldenEye (Nintendo 64)
Still the most-played 64bit game in the office, especially now that **Edge** has retrieved all of its controllers from neighbouring mags in order to really get into the fantastic multiplayer mode.


Resident Evil 2


GunBullet

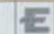
nuMedia

A meeting point for media capitalising on the digital entertainment revolution

in association with



No 20

CD-ROM 

Mind Gym

Perhaps, after all, there are still people left in the world with intellectual aspirations. Modern culture seems to emphasise bodily exercise while at the same time plotting new ways of removing the necessity of mental activity. If your brain has been piling on the cellulite, through underuse, all is not necessarily lost. As the title of this CD-ROM suggests, it is a digitised fitness programme for your mind.

Which is not to say that it's even remotely dull and worthy. On the contrary, even habitual *Sun* readers will find it hilarious, as it positively bristles with surreal humour owing much to the pre-war Situationist and Dadaist movements (updated for the ironic '90s, naturally). Boot it up and it bombards users with carefully constructed nonsense while urging them into a measure of interactivity via some of the most unconventional questionnaires ever realised.

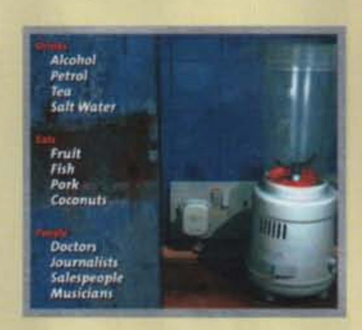
This, it subsequently transpires, is both a test of the manner of thought processes and a means of getting users to think about the way in which they think. And that's just the beginning.

Underneath the apparently run-down but beautifully rendered locker room main screen, a series of rooms lead to all sorts of cerebral exercises which may be conventional in concept (one involves opening a safe by remembering visual and musical sequences, for example) but are surprisingly advanced in execution.

Slowly, insidiously, as you work your way through the CD, you find that your brain does, indeed, start to feel a bit fresher than before, and if you don't, there's a constant voiceover telling you where you're going wrong and urging you to start thinking laterally.

Although following a session with *Mind Gym* users may not suddenly be able to whizz through the *Guardian* crossword as a direct result, or beat Carol Vorderman to the punch on 'Countdown', they'll definitely gain something from splashing out on a copy.







- Published by Macmillan Interactive
- Developed by NoHo Digital; produced by Melrose Film Productions
- £30
- Out now, PC/Mac

Music 

The Second XI
Various
Wall of Sound



Here, the big-beat Wall of Sound collective present an inspirational bundle of fat, breakbeat funk that is sure to get the limbs pumping. Nearly every Wall of Sound producer is present in different shapes and forms, the most impressive donations coming from Hustlers of Culture's 'Kickin' Off', a rumbling noise of jazz funk, Agent Provocateur's 'Red Tape', a surprisingly effective guitar-driven singalong, and the Dirty Beatniks' dreamy acid roller 'Beatnik Bounce' – the latter set to keep listeners hopping around the bedroom/living room/kitchen time after time.

Platipus Volume 3
Various
Platipus Records



As one of the world's leading trance labels, Platipus has become better known for its quality melodica than thumping psychedelica, and its third compilation is possibly the warmest and most emotive collection of trance ever assembled on a single CD. Highlights include Libra Presents Taylor's haunting club anthem 'Anomaly', Way Out West's remix of Clanger's 'Seadog', and the dream-like, fluttering chords of both Quietman's 'Now and Zen' and Univeral State of Mind's 'All Because of You'. C64 music-like in tunefulness but still reassuringly cheese-free, this is dance music that even your grandma would 'ave it to.

Gadgets



JVC GR-DVX2 Camcorder

This is *the* hottest camcorder in the world. Pricey, yes, but that £1,600 price buys you digital quality, and the ease of use that is to be expected when dealing with a digital format. JVC's GR-DVX2 uses the relatively new MiniDV cassette format, a digital tape which offers LaserDisc-quality pictures and CD-quality sound (when overdubbing is not employed). The tapes last an hour, the battery about 45 minutes, and the camera comes with a full PC connectivity kit for professional-level editing.

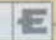
JVC launched this camcorder's predecessor just over a year ago. The GR-DV1 didn't have the latest model's LCD viewfinder, however, so using it was far harder, and previewing recorded footage was completely impossible. The addition of an LCD viewfinder also makes using the menus a doddle and adding wipes and fades, together with any of the many digital effects, can be done in confidence: you get to see what you're recording rather than having to wait until you get it home to check it out on your TV.

● GR-DVX2	● £1,600
● JVC	● Out now



GR-DVX2, JVC, tel: 0181 450 3282

CD ROM



Virtual Springfield

Describing *Virtual Springfield* as a game would be something of an overstatement, for it is really a kind of interactive Simpsons joke book, where the 'player' wanders around, visiting various buildings and meeting some of the characters from classic cartoon series. The interface used to explore the city is a rather clunky *Myst*-type affair; each time a crossroads is reached, users click on one of the limited options available. There's no free movement, and, annoyingly, it's impossible to reverse – so if a wrong direction is taken, a trip round the block is necessary to have another stab at it.

Predictably, the locations themselves provide the real meat of the product. There are 17 to visit ranging from regulars such as the Simpsons household, Moe's Tavern and the Nuclear powerplant, to lesser-known locales like the town hall and cemetery. Each one works like a point-and-click adventure: the player moves a cursor around the screen and, when it turns into a hand, it's possible to interact with whatever's underneath. This can achieve various aims – in the Kwik-E-Mart, for example, the player clicks on the magazine rack to view a selection of publications ranging from 'Snail Fancy' to 'Armchair Survivalist', while in Krusty's film studio it's possible to view a few excellent 'Itchy and Scratchy' shorts.

There are a few slightly more in-depth interactive moments. It's possible to play four of the coin-ops in the Noiseland arcade, and there's an excellent *Doom* spoof in the Kwik-E-Mart where the player gets a first-person view of life behind Apu's counter, swatting potential shoplifters with a broom. Essentially, though, everything in the game is a joke. Literally. So don't expect any challenging sub games or teasing puzzles.

For obsessive fans of the series, *Virtual Springfield* is possibly a must-have purchase. There are tons of typically Simpsons gags – from the contents of Moe's back room, to the safety standards at the powerplant – and all of the key characters crop up. It is a pity, though, that Fox didn't go the whole hog with the project and turn it into a fully fledged point-and-clicker in the *Monkey Island* vein. As it stands, with that ye olde interface and lack of compulsive gameplay elements, this is merely a novelty item with a touch of charm.



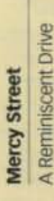








There can't be many labels out there that would dare to put ethereal folky beats, remixed '70s and Euro trance on the same album. But Stress has, and more surprisingly, has got away with it in style. Pursuing its trademark progressive trance style on CD one (snippets of Freefall's 'Shrug' can be heard on this issue's cover CD), it then ventures out into more eclectic territory with memorable tracks from Genetica and Assassins of Sound. Finally, it's left to Paul van Dyk, Sasha and Tilt, amongst others, to remix a variety of styles on CD three. Pigeonhole all this if you can.





French label F Communications has taken something of a detour here, with an album that eschews the usual computer/sequencer approach to composition, instead relying on real instruments, an 8-track recorder and a delicate touch. And yet the listener could easily fail to notice the difference, such is the skill with which composer Jay Alanski has put together these 17 tracks, vocal samples, metronomic rhythms and all. There's great structure here and an organic bias that provides room for balaeric guitar and other mellow delights. Blissfully laidback stuff.

▶



Gadgets

Ericsson GS18 Mobile Phone

Mobile phones may be everywhere nowadays, but not everyone has one of these – Ericsson's new GS18, which comes replete with a full modem, PC communications software and a lead which connects it to a standard RS232 serial port. This means mobile communication has never been easier, or cheaper – just plug it into your laptop and you're on the Net, sending email or bunging faxes around with world, without the need to buy a costly PCMCIA modem as well as your phone and account.

The phone comes with all of the usual digital benefits: 99 names and numbers can be stored, it reveals who's calling before answering, it has a short message facility, and you can screen numbers that you really don't want to hear from. The unit is also robust, though not so large as to make carrying it around a pain.

GS18, Ericsson, tel: 0990 237237



- GS 18
- £150
- Ericsson
- Available now



Books

Digerati

Considering the worldwide impact of the digital information revolution, it is strange to think that there are perhaps only a handful of true personalities responsible. It is these people – the Digerati of the title – who have contributed essays to John Brockman's candid insight into the world of the Internet. From skeptics like Clifford Stoll to buccaneers like Louis Rossetto (co-founder of *Wired* magazine), the cyber elite hereby line up to preach their own particular gospels, revealing the true stories and theories behind the technology which is busy shaping the lives of everyone else.

Although this kind of 'information superhighway expose' is certainly not uncommon, 'Digerati' is by no means a run-of-the-mill publication. This diverse group of individuals always have plenty to say and are never dull or pretentious – which is a remarkable achievement considering the subject matter. Indeed, what they do have to say, especially about each other (after speaking on their chosen field each contributor is invited to talk about his peers), is interesting and revealing. Altogether, a fascinating read for technophiles.



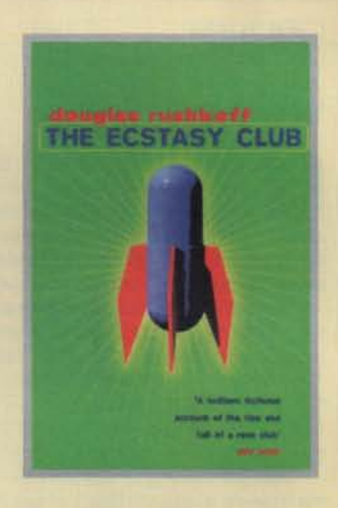
- John Brockman
- Orion Publishing
- £20
- ISBN 0-75281-158-4

The Ecstasy Club

Springing from the themes explored in Rushkoff's earlier techno diatribe 'Cyberia', this debut novel focuses on a group of Generation X thirtysomethings who attempt to use rave culture, cutting-edge VR technology and plenty of hallucinogenic pharmaceuticals to reach the next plane of consciousness and break free of the mundane.

Written in diary form, 'The Ecstasy Club' follows the sensory entrepreneurs as they hold a series of parties which, unbeknownst to the rest of the loved-up participants, have a much darker purpose at heart. With a large helping of conspiracy theory and religious paranoia thrown in for good measure, Rushkoff calls on his own experiences, from the cyber cafés of San Francisco to the state-of-the-art technology of Silicon Valley, to roll a consummate joint of techno-shamanism.

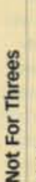
This is perhaps a ride that only those who have sampled the drug-induced planes mentioned here will appreciate, and certainly the reader's views on dance culture will colour their interpretations. However, fans of Jeff Noon and Irvine Welsh will no doubt find much to interest them here.



- Douglas Rushkoff
- Hodder and Stoughton
- £10
- ISBN 0-340-69680-X



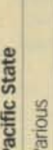
Music



Not For Threes
Plaid
Warp



There's something in the water at Warp Records – how else can the obsession with complex clockwork rhythms and outlandish song titles be explained? ('Abla Eedio', 'Extork' or 'Milh', anyone?) Once half of Black Dog and sometimes collaborators with Bjork, Plaid pretty much have the humanised machine music angle mastered, this latest set retaining the electro minimalism but packing enough hooks, quirks and funky beats to make this a genuine journey rather than some cold exercise in finely textured techno. Not as wild as some of Warp's output, but that will suit plenty of technoheads just fine.



Pacific State
Various
Deviant



From the creators of the Volume compilations comes a two-CD insight into Japanese techno, and it's an unsurprisingly masterful affair. Set one features the harder-edged material, with artists like Ken Ishi pushing the beats and bleeps to the max. The excellent second CD is more experimental, with DJ Krush proving as beguiling as ever, while others head every which way with drum'n'bass, funk, lush string arrangements, even slow beat. Proof that the Japanese now not only craft the best electronic instruments, they can also use them with as much skill as their Euro counterparts.

netview

EDGE'S EXAMINATION OF THE ONLINE GAMING AND INTERNET SCENE

Trilobyte evolves on Mars

Trilobyte, the PC developer best known for the legendary *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*, is working on *Extreme Warfare*, a hugely ambitious multiplayer Internet game. With formidable minimum specs already released, some have suggested that it will do for megaplayer games what *The 7th Guest* did for CD-ROM.

Hardware 3D acceleration will be a mandatory requirement for this sci-fi battlegame set on Mars, which promises to marry high-quality visuals with multiplayer support for up to 50 combatants. Each player will choose between joining two warring camps comprising aliens or human colonists. The opposing teams will then meet in briefing rooms before the mission begins to formulate strategies, and each member will assume a specific role in the overall mission.

'This project breaks new ground in online multiplayer teamplay,' says **Graeme Devine**, president and lead designer at Trilobyte. 'Developing immersive worlds that people can play as a team against other teams online is, I believe, where games are heading. Just as we used to collect around the campfire and tell stories of how we beat dragons in faraway lands, the online communities need their dragons and I'm happy to provide them.'

Devine has actually had the project in mind since long before the explosion of multiplayer Internet gaming. He conceived the basics three years ago, and presented a rough proposal to Trilobyte's then-publisher Virgin, which opted for a sequel to *The 7th Guest* instead.

Now finally coming to fruition, his game is still refreshingly ambitious. Campaign scenarios will see wars raging for as long as a few weeks, with players logging into the front lines as often as their daily schedules allow. Trilobyte also claims its client/server software will make *Extreme Warfare* playable even in the face of fairly heavy lag.

Extreme Warfare is due out in April '98, to be published by Brøderbund's fledgling games division, Red Orb, and supported via its Red Orb Zone gaming service.

The URL for Red Orb's homepage is www.redorb.com





Graeme Devine (right) claims that his company, Trilobyte, will make unprecedented co-operative megaplayer gaming available next Spring in the form of its Mars-based battlegame *Extreme Warfare*

Wireplay gets rewired

Wireplay, BT's multiplayer PC gaming service, looks like finally delivering its potential. The service is at last supporting *Quake*, and support for GTi's groundbreaking *Total Annihilation* (see page 76) is now in the pipeline.

Over the last 12 months, Wireplay has built up a subscriber base of over 20,000 – users who've been persuaded that by cutting out the Internet and using a phone network directly, BT can offer minimal lag and maximum reliability. But the service has been dogged by problems, including latency and a lack of decent games support.

New client software has addressed both these problems. A ping time of under 120milliseconds is now targeted, while new PPP-compatibility makes it far easier to adapt a game for the service. At ECTS, **Edge** enjoyed *Quake* over Wireplay with a Ping time consistently under 160ms – not quite on target but far better then most UK Internet gaming options.

Meanwhile, implementing *Total Annihilation* shows Wireplay finally tuning into the games market it seeks to support. In contrast, early games were often old and unsensational (the launch title, *Euro 96*, was hardly a perfect demonstration for online gaming). Interestingly, Gremlin's upcoming soccer sim *Actua Soccer 2* will come bundled with a Wireplay client and will provide a stern test for the revamped service.

Wireplay is also heading abroad. In partnership with American giant MCI, BT will launch Wireplay in 50 American cities this October while a deal with the Australian corporation Telstra will see the BT flag flying down under before the year's out.







By supporting a crop of new, respected games such as *Actua Soccer 2* (left) and *Total Annihilation*, with Wireplay BT has signalled its growing understanding of the needs of online gamers in the UK

Wireplay is paid for via a premium-rated telephone charge. This currently clocks in at 6p per minute at peak times, and 2.5p off peak (equivalent to £1.50 per hour). There are no other charges. Visit www.wireplay.com for full details of the service

B I G I N J A P A N

- THIS MONTH...
- FFVII RERELEASE
- NINTENDO POWER
- ENIX COMPO 2

EDGE LOOKS AT SQUARESOFT'S LATEST MONEY-MAKING EXERCISE WHICH TAKES ADVANTAGE OF ITS FOREIGN FINAL FANTASY SUCCESS. NINTENDO, MEANWHILE, MAKES PROGRESS WITH ITS GAMES-ON-DEMAND SCHEME, WHILE ENIX REVEALS THE RESPONSE TO DATE FROM CODERS EAGER TO GRAB A SLICE OF ITS $400,000 PRIZE MONEY

FFVII facelift gives Square a boost

Following the huge success of *Final Fantasy VII* in the US, SquareSoft has decided to increase its domestic profits from the game by releasing the international version in Japan. Square's inspired RPG took a team of 150 staff 14 months to develop, costing a not-inconsiderable ¥2,900 million (£14.7m) – although the 27 consecutive weeks spent at the top of charts of respected Nipponese videogames journal *Famitsu Express* and 3,216,773 Japanese units already sold should have more than done its share towards getting Square's bank account back in the black.

Nevertheless, *FFVII International* is being marketed as an optimised version of the Japanese release, based on feedback from the nation's players. Some of the cut-scenes are now longer, and the menu has been redesigned so that it's more intuitive and therefore easier to use. Also, the number of enemies has decreased so that battles are less frequent, yet conversely there are now two bosses for players to deal with: the harmless-sounding Emerald and Ruby Weapon. Other changes include the location of the Chocobos in the farm, allowing them to breed more rapidly.

While the story has remained the same, the new changes have proved enough of a convincing factor to get this latest version back at the top of the videogame charts in Japan. Hopefully Square isn't thinking about 'doing a Capcom' or players might soon be faced with the prospect of *FFVII International Director's Cut Alpha Turbo*...

Nintendo's Power plan

Nintendo's latest venture involves a new and cheaper method of selling Super Famicom games, and one that may be an indication of things to come. Called Nintendo Power, it allows customers to purchase a game ticket from a Multimedia Station – a type of vending machine – installed in Lawson shops (Japan's second largest chain of convenience stores), which, once handed over to one of the store's smiling attendants, will result in the specific Super Famicom game being copied onto a SF Memory Cassette. The rewritable 32Mbit cassettes cost ¥3,980 (£20), and depending on the size of the games saved on it, can store up to five titles. Each of the older games will cost players ¥1,000 (£5), while newer titles will require punters to stump up anything from ¥2,000 (£10) to ¥4,000 (£20). The concept was launched at the end of September with 40 titles, although 100 are now available, including classic releases from Nintendo, Capcom, Konami, HudsonSoft, Human and ChunSoft.

Nintendo is not unfamiliar with this approach. In 1986, the videogames colossus distributed its Disk-Writer machines to over 10,000 toy and videogame selling points all over Japan, allowing owners of the Disk-System for the Famicom (aka NES in the west) to download games onto a floppy disk. However, the system proved unsuccessful, partly because retailers objected to the amount of space taken up by the enormous Disk-Writer machines.

Hopefully, this latest attempt will prove more store owner-friendly, as well as discouraging the secondhand market, which may well be one of Nintendo's aims. Don't expect a Nintendo 64 version to appear for a while yet, though.

ENIX Game Contest, take 2

As a result of the successful ENIX Internet Entertainment Contest run earlier this year (see **E**42), the Japanese developer has announced the 265 registered entries received so far for its second challenge, the ENIX Game Software Contest 2.

The biggest number of applications chasing the $200,000 grand prize has come from Japan (57), where hobbyist coding appears to be still on the increase; followed by India (41), which has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the information technology field; and the US (39). European response has also been favourable, the UK with the second highest number of candidates, at one less than Germany's 17-strong entry count.

The final date for entries is December 20, and to qualify contestants must not have sold or released their product to the public, and it must be PC or Mac compatible. Readers wishing to register, or look for more information, should check out the dedicated contest website (http://www.marinet.or.jp/com/enix).





Train sim *Densha da Go Go* (right) is heading for the PlayStation in Japan, complete with controller (above)



Final Fantasy VII International has captured the imagination of Japanese gamers in almost the same fashion as the original







The Nintendo Power system allows SFC gamers to purchase tickets from Multimedia Stations (right), which are then given to vendors in exchange for game files downloaded via specialist kit (far right) onto Memory Cassettes (above)

Index

Prescreen Alphas

The newest shots from the latest games – this month the much-vaunted Nintendo 64 trio of Legend of Zelda 64, F-Zero 64 and Yoshi's Story take centre stage among a mixed bag of genres







Judging by these latest *Legend of Zelda 64* shots, Nintendo has worked on Link's face (above), smoothing out his features, and giving a more youthful appearance. Whereas the visual proof of being able to ride the horse is unlikely to surprise anyone, the depth of field illustrated by these images should (right, far right)





As expected and subsequently confirmed by Miyamoto himself, the latest **Legend of Zelda 64** screenshots show Link, the game's central character, riding the horse previously seen following him around. Other features expected to make it into the final version include Rumble Pak compatibility, the possibility to use different types of bows and arrows, and two swords – one-handed and two-handed versions – each allowing ten attack moves with which to defeat an opponent, as well as a variety of new items. Other aspects found in previous *Zelda* outings such as mini games and challenges from villagers are also expected to make it into the plot, which again takes place in the land of Hyrule, with the evil Gannon making another appearance.

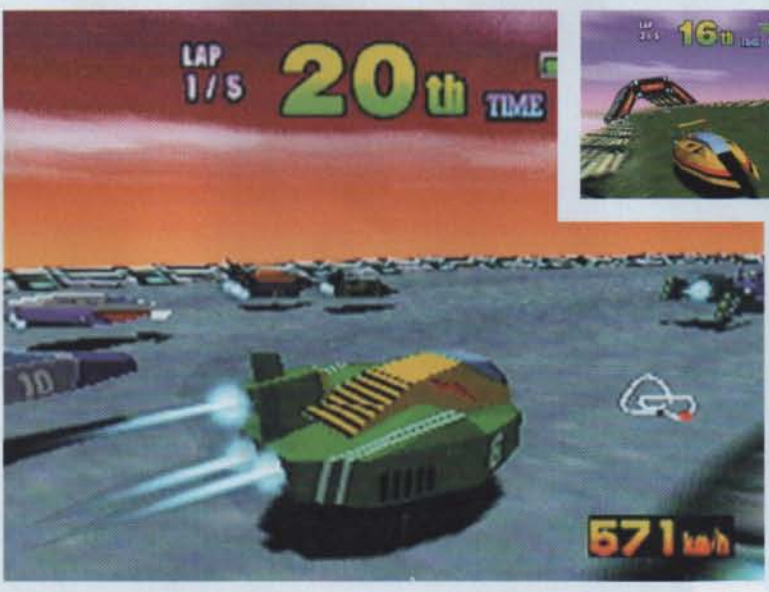
The graphics are currently looking among the most impressive yet seen on the N64 and they are backed up by excellent animation and lighting effects, making it surely one of the most keenly anticipated Nintendo games of all time.

Work on **F-Zero 64**, Nintendo's other eagerly awaited



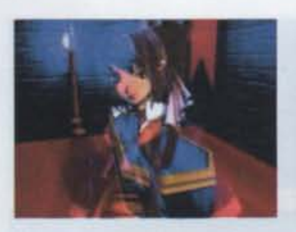








These latest *F-Zero 64* images from Nintendo show a wider variety of vehicles than have previously been seen, as well as indicating that as many as 29 of them may be racing at a time








Very little is known about *Dracula 3D* as Konami remains cagey about releasing any details of its forthcoming N64 title, except for these shots from a recent video

release, is continuing ahead smoothly. The latest shots dispel any original worries that no more than two other craft would be seen on the screen simultaneously (for fear of slowdown). Furthermore, allegations circulating on the Internet that the game may use an optional 64DD cartridge offering players access to extra tracks have yet to be confirmed by Nintendo.

Not all games nowadays have to be 3D polygon affairs, a fact Treasure has already proven with *Yuke Yuke Trouble Makers*. Nintendo, of course, is well aware of this and **Yoshi's Story** is the company's own 2D platform offering. Instead of the all-out action found in Treasure's adventure, Nintendo's effort would seem to place equal emphasis on puzzle elements. Expect most of the Mario-associated characters to make an appearance as the imaginary green-skinned creature walks, runs and jumps its way through the beautifully coloured and highly original levels. News of the title's western release being put back until 1998 are understandably disappointing, but judging by the visual quality of the latest screenshots it may well be worth the wait.

Continuing the Nintendo theme, Konami's latest N64 project, **Gasp!**, is an N64 beat 'em up and as such represents new territory for the company. Nevertheless, it's one the Japanese outfit is hoping will finally provide Nintendo's machine with a much-needed definitive example of the genre.

The version presented at the recent Tokyo Game Show was admittedly early, with only three characters available, each possessing a limited number of special moves. However, beneath the rough graphical exterior and simplified gameplay lie some intriguing features. First, rather than the usual square or round arenas, fights take place among obstacles such as crates, boxes and tyres, and the boundary of the arena itself will be determined by further obstacles such as walls or ▶





Shown in early form at the recent Tokyo Game Show, Konami's *Gasp!* for the Nintendo 64 offers players the ability to fight within a true 3D environment as well as using obstacles within the game's fighting area to their advantage






Yoshi's Story is already displaying the sort of potential for graphics and originality that only Nintendo seems to be able to inject into its titles





These new screenshots from *Metal Gear Solid* show new characters and some impressive new third- and first-person viewpoints (above)









◀ vehicles. Second, interaction with these is possible so that, for example, throwing an opponent onto a car will damage it.

The version shown at the Tokyo Game Show was still very early, but Konami seems intent on using original camera angles and weather effects to spice up what it must be hoping will turn out to be the Nintendo 64's leading beat 'em up when it's released in early 1998.

Also from Konami, **Metal Gear Solid** is one of the most interesting games yet announced for the PlayStation. As the six-minute clip on this month's CD reveals, Konami has included some great touches. Following *GoldenEye*'s lead, *Metal Gear Solid*'s AI is angled toward encouraging inventive and intelligent gameplay. Stealthily infiltrating the enemy base is the name of the game, although a wide selection of weapons can collected as play progresses – in one section, the player can even use the body of a killed guard as a human shield.

As things stand, **Edge** eagerly awaits *Metal Gear Solid*'s release – currently scheduled for a February release in Japan.

Yet more PlayStation wizardry can be seen in Crystal Dynamic's much improved sequel, **Gex: Enter the Gecko**. The eponymous lizard can explore his new *Mario*-alike 3D world in several ways, including the ability to stick to walls, making for some extraordinarily disorientating gameplay as ceilings and other surfaces are negotiated – using Sony's analogue stick, if players have one to hand.

At E3 this looked much more promising than Sony's own *Crash 2*, even having to be displayed on a small monitor to not upstage the Bandicoot. Expect a PlayStation release in February '98, with an N64 version to follow. E

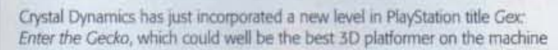






Grandia from GameArts still occupies the place of most promising action RPG heading towards the Saturn this year





Crystal Dynamics has just incorporated a new level in PlayStation title *Gex: Enter the Gecko*, which could well be the best 3D platformer on the machine









Konami's *Racing Jam* made its debut on a lower end board at JAMMA but is also being developed for a more powerful Cobra spec than the one running *Fighting Wu-Shu* (see page 98). This deluxe version (right, below) handles around two million polygons/sec





AM1's *Ski Champ* features some of the most realistic scenic detail yet scene in a videogame courtesy of the Model 3 board, and was extremely popular at the recent JAMMA event. Expect a closer look next month



Acclaim's coin-op division has used 3Dfx-based technology in creating the unusual *Armageddon* (below)









The results of Taito's collaboration with 3Dfx were revealed at JAMMA in the form of *Psychic Force 2*





RESIDENT EVIL 2

FEATURING A MUCH LARGER GAME WORLD, MORE DETAILED SCENERY, NEW CHARACTERS, AND YET MORE BLOODY VIOLENCE, RESIDENT EVIL 2 LOOKS SET TO GIVE GAMERS EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT...











In addition to visual improvements, Capcom has worked on small but tangible atmospheric elements. Thus, metal items clang as the player walks over them



This impressively post-apocalyptic exterior sequence showcases some of the most impressive, atmospheric fire effects yet seen on the PlayStation

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Capcom
Developer:	In-house
Release:	1st Qtr '98 (J)
Origin:	Japan

In June 1996, the release of *Resident Evil* came as a rude shock to the gaming world – partly due to its bloody gameplay and schlock horror setting, and partly due to it coming from Capcom. At the time, the Japanese softco was stuck in a rut, churning out conservative updates of its renowned fighting games rather than producing leading-edge concepts. *Resident Evil* was also targeted at an adult audience, earning a '15' rating in the UK. Whatever else the sequel was to bring, even greater visceral action was bound to play a crucial role.

The official preview version of *Resident Evil 2* (free with the *Director's Cut* edition) demonstrates some striking aesthetic improvements. Play commences in a






Heralded only by a pained groaning, zombies lurch into the frame – just like a Romero film






Exploring the police station, Leon comes under attack from a particularly nasty – yet exceptionally well-animated – skinless foe



Capcom is thought to have incorporated a feature wherein progress as one character affects the nature of the game playable with the other

stunning post-apocalyptic tableau, with the player standing in front of a burning pile of wreckage. Tongues of flame flicker in realtime and bathe the scene in an eerie red glow, even spreading to immolate any zombies that stray too close. Additionally, while the camera viewpoints remain fixed – using some classic George Romero-style approaches – to enhance the feeling of claustrophobia, the number of angles from which the action is viewed has been increased.

Along with a significant advance in the resolution of the backdrops, the multiplicity of views combines with some impressively cinematic framing to create a far more involving game world than before. And with an increase in locations, and the new ability for characters to clamber over objects, the world is a far more interesting place to explore.

Another (thankfully) noticeable development is the quality of the in-game spoken dialogue – the voice acting now adds to, rather than detracts from, the credibility of the final product.

However, in realtime graphical terms, the rather primitive animation of the lead characters has not yet been addressed, although the *Tomb Raider*-influenced auto-aiming system is a welcome touch.

Now the global furore that engulfed *Resident Evil* has dissipated, **Edge** hopes that the moral majority realises not all videogame players slot neatly into the target audience of the 'Teletubbies', and that the sequel to a classic game reaches the shores of America and Europe unadulterated by the censor's scissors.




***Resident Evil 2* contains a far greater variety of backdrops, even at this far-from-finished stage**

VIPER

VIPER HAS BEEN CAUGHT IN DEVELOPMENT HELL AND INTER-COMPANY DIFFICULTIES FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS, BUT FRESH-FACED GERMAN SOFTCO X-AMPLE ARCHITECTURES BELIEVES GREAT THINGS SPRING FROM CHAOS



The move may be bit of a gamble, but *Viper*'s diverse and hugely detailed backgrounds have no doubt benefited from the switch to on-rails gameplay







X-Ample's revolutionary engine has allowed for some excellent effects

As politicians love to point out, Europe has changed a lot over the last five years. Take the videogame industry. In the days of the CBM64 and later the Amiga, Germany was a hot-bed of prolific demo coders and innovative design teams, pushing those respective machines to their technical limits. Nowadays France has easily overtaken its neighbour in terms of globally revered product and even Scandinavia is pulling ahead. There are, however, a few talented teams determined to make an impression once again.

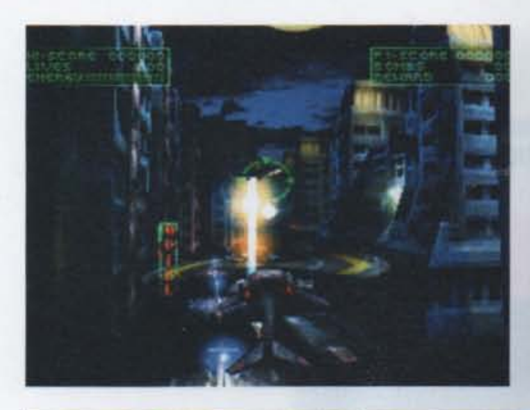
One of these is X-Ample Architectures, a tiny new studio formed by two programmers and three artists from Neon, the codeshop responsible for flashy PlayStation shooter *Tunnel B1*. **Michael Bottner**, one of the breakaway programmers, explains the reason for the divorce: 'After *Tunnel B1* was released, it was decided to develop three games in parallel. This caused a lot of disagreements, so in April '97, we split from Neon.' It hasn't been an entirely clean fracture, though: X-Ample is now working on *Viper*, a concept that's been knocking around the Neon office since 1994.

So far, the game has followed a tortuous route to fruition. 'It started as a simple demonstration three years ago,' explains Bottner. 'Then, it was going to be part of this ultimate action movie crossover in which *Tunnel B1* was also set to feature. However, we overestimated our capabilities and were unable to finish the project within the allotted time frame, so we released *Tunnel B1* as a self-contained game.' Having been impressed by an early demo of *Viper*, though, Ocean felt development should go ahead. The Manchester outfit duly bought the rights for the game from Neon and handed the project to X-Ample. The rest, so goes the saying, is history.

So *Viper* was conceived as a section of one game, dumped, rewritten as a new game, dumped again, and then finally brought back from the brink as something completely different – **Edge** gets the feeling this has been something of a baptism of fire for the fledgling outfit. 'We've been through so many difficulties since the decision was made to develop this product,' admits Bottner. 'I'm proud we've had the power to survive what we've gone through. Our aim now is to finish this title and show the rest of the world that even a small team can produce revolutionary games and set new standards.'

Despite this grandiose statement, a glimpse at the game does not mark it out as a particularly radical experiment. In fact, *Viper* is a futuristic on-rails shooter, with an essentially 2D plane of action – the player directs the crosshairs (while the craft follows), blasting anything that hoves into view. Some will inevitably say that this is a step backwards, as the title was originally conceived as a free-roaming shooter. Bottner disagrees, however. 'We've spent a lot of time making sure the player gets the experience of "free-flight" and in the end we found a solution which allows for some 3D perspectives of unbelievable visual impact.'

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Ocean
Developer:	X-Ample Arch.
Release:	Easter
Origin:	Germany





As in the stylish shooter *Tunnel B1*, the artists are making excellent use of lighting and shadows, creating a highly atmospheric backdrop for the action

The game's City level retains the 'Blade Runner' look of the original *Viper* demo, conceived three years ago as part of another project

And the game certainly does look good. When **Edge** first saw it 18 months ago, the dark, looming cityscapes that zoomed beneath the 'copter were a passable reproduction of the 'Blade Runner' 'neon encrusted sci-fi metropolis' theme. Now the craft is right in amongst them, à la *G-Police*, and the scenery is much more detailed with various buildings piling up on the horizon, each with an outcrop of those ubiquitous neon ads. On top of that, there are now several different areas, including canyons and mines, each with a highly distinctive and individual look. It is clear that what X-Ample has sacrificed in terms of vehicle control it has made up for in background diversity – an interesting if risky trade-off.

Behind all this visual finesse is P.H.I.G.S., the team's apparently revolutionary multiplatform 3D engine. Capable of drawing up to 10,000 shaded and lit polygons per frame (at 30fps), the engine can also build and animate any hierarchical skeleton model and then rotate, scale and/or shade every joint of that model in each render frame. It's also capable of handling 'huge' 3D worlds, morphing objects from one keyframe to another, and rendering chrome-faced 3D objects. Which all sounds impressive – at least impressive enough to apparently prompt Ocean into using the technology in several other forthcoming titles.

But players don't see the underlying technology, of course, they see the game. Although *Star Fox 64* has proved the on-rails shooter is still a marketable concept, can X-Ample compete on the same terms as NCL? Bottner is clearly confident. 'You are

'YOU HAVE TO PLAY THE GAME SEVERAL TIMES TO EXPLORE EACH LEVEL AND FIND ALL THE SECRETS, SO THE EXPERIENCE DIFFERS EACH TIME YOU PLAY'

wrong if you think *Viper* is a simple shoot 'em up. Each level has hidden areas and different fly-paths to choose from. As in *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* you have to play the game several times to explore each level and find all the secrets, so the experience will be different each time you play.'

There is no doubt the team has finesse to make a mark. *Tunnel B1*, with its brilliant visuals, would have been a key PlayStation title had the gameplay been more developed. This time, those responsible have pared down their original goals and spent longer on the latter, vital aspect. If they can get it right, and implement the last few stages of development successfully (all of the bosses and many of the later levels are yet to be finished), this could well turn out to be the 'Apocalypse Now' of videogames: a classic borne out of excruciatingly difficult circumstances. As Bottner puts it, 'Good games under good conditions can be written by anyone, but good games under bad conditions can only be done by the best.'



Can *Viper* follow in the footsteps of the on-rails classic, *Star Fox 64*?

BATTLEZONE

Creating a sequel to the most famous 3D vector-graphics game in history was never going to be easy, but by adding strategy elements Activision has brought Battlezone into the '90s



Running without 3D acceleration, *Battlezone* creates very some detailed models, although setting the action on barren planets certainly helps...









The range of craft available in the finished game will include 'Star Wars'-like walkers

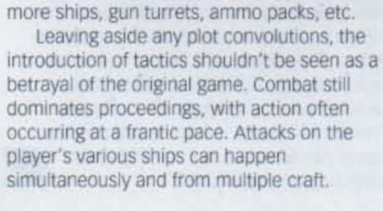
Format:	PC
Publisher:	Activision
Developer:	In-house
Release:	Spring '98
Origin:	US

As the sequel to one of the earliest ever 3D polygon games, Activision's '90s version of *Battlezone* has a towering reputation to live up to.

When work commenced 18 months ago, the Activision team were undecided as to which way to take the project. 'Then around that time *Command & Conquer* arrived in the office and work kind of ground to a halt,' admits director **Andrew Goldman**, 'so we thought it'd be nice to combine some of those elements in the new *Battlezone*.' Therefore, while the concept remained the same – a 3D battle game – Goldman's group introduced several realtime strategy elements.

Set in the late '60s, the plot precept is that the space race is, in fact, a myth. Following a meteor shower in the '50s, the Cold War factions discovered a new 'bio-metal' and set about exploring space to find more of it. After working through a couple of training missions, the action for real begins on the moon – complete with manned space stations and some distinctly non-1970s technology. As in *C&C*, missions revolve around collecting deposits of bio-metal that lie scattered across the surface of the various planets and moons. This is then used to build more ships, gun turrets, ammo packs, etc.

Leaving aside any plot convolutions, the introduction of tactics shouldn't be seen as a betrayal of the original game. Combat still dominates proceedings, with action often occurring at a frantic pace. Attacks on the player's various ships can happen simultaneously and from multiple craft.



Unoptimised and running on a P200 with MMX, *Battlezone* creates a highly impressive game world, with hi-res texturing and fluid movement. Activision currently only has code for Direct X, with custom support for 3Dfx and other cards promised for the final version. Minimum spec is an optimistic-sounding P90, although players will be able to alter detail settings as required.

Probably more appropriate to *Battlezone* than many other titles is a range of multiplayer modes. With fourplayer mission-based games, up to 16 competitors in a deathmatch, plus Internet matches, it would seem Activision has covered all bases. However, Goldman's team has also included a terrain editor, allowing gamers to create their own scenarios for others to play within.

Even at this early stage (and ignoring the dubious Russia-versus-America plotline), Activision looks to have imbued *Battlezone* with a welcome variety of gameplay that would have been lacking from a mere duplication of the original.





***Battlezone*'s scenario editor (above) allows players to alter terrain and craft positions**

SEGA TOURING CAR

Despite the lack of thirdparty support for the Saturn in the west, Sega can still call upon its talented stable of coin-op teams to supply titles for conversion



Sega Touring Car **currently conveys a fantastic sensation of speed, albeit at a** *Daytona***-like frame rate. Great engine sounds help to convey velocity**





The handling of the four cars is noticeably varied





It is claimed that the finished game will have three hidden tracks

By following games like *Daytona* and *Sega Rally* with *Touring Car*, Sega was bound to confuse gamers, as its creator (AM Annex) designed it to handle in the same nose-heavy, front-wheel drive way as the real vehicles. After countless powersliding extravaganzas, this change of tack proved hard for many to adjust to.

As with any Sega arcade title, there is always the likelihood of conversion to its home system. And so the Model 2-based *Sega Touring Car Championship* nears completion on the Saturn, courtesy of the in-house consumer software team behind the Saturn version of *Virtual-On*.

The player has four cars to choose from: an Alfa Romeo 155, a Mercedes C-class, a Opel Calibra, and a Toyota Supra. Promisingly, even in the early version **Edge** played, there is a marked difference in the handling of the various vehicles, something many racing titles struggle with. Taking corners in the wild child of the bunch, the low-slung Mercedes, proves far more tricky than in the much tamer Opel, for example.

At this stage, Sega has opted for speed rather than a smooth frame rate, although it is reportedly evening out the balance before completion. As yet, the graphics are plagued by a rather chunky look, a factor that it will surely have more difficulty in streamlining.



Aurally, *Sega Touring Car* currently has one of the most extreme ranges of engine noises ever witnessed on a home machine, the tone rising from a low growl to a whine as the cars are pushed further and further.

The game may stumble by offering only three tracks as standard – and three not-especially-dissimilar ones at that (due to the very nature of touring car racing). Certainly, compared to CodeMasters' *TOCA* game (see page 52), which offers eight circuits, Sega's track count looks meagre.

However, as **Edge** went to press it learned that the game will also include three hidden tracks and an official Internet ranking site (see News) to give the game a truly international competitive appeal. Hopefully a refined and balanced graphics engine will realise the game's full potential.

Format:	Saturn
Publisher:	Sega
Developer:	In-house
Release:	November (Jap)
Origin:	Japan

OVERBLOOD 2

THE ORIGINAL OVERBLOOD ATTEMPTED TO RECREATE THE LIKES OF ALONE IN THE DARK IN A REALTIME, SCI-FI-THEMED ENVIRONMENT, BUT FAILED ON THE ACTION FRONT. WILL THE SEQUEL DELIVER THE GOODS?



The backgrounds are now more colourful, the camera is more manageable, and the characters are smaller, but Riverhillsoft has retained the puzzle element that was evident in the first game









This time round, players will face a wider variety of enemies to deal with

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Riverhillsoft
Developer:	In-house
Release:	Early '98
Origin:	Japan

Riverhillsoft has a history of developing third-person adventures. *Doctor Hauzer* on the 3DO was followed by *Overblood* on the PlayStation, which enjoyed much success in its homeland, and has recently seen a release in the west to a more moderate reception.

The sequel, shown at the recent Tokyo Game Show, looks set to improve on its predecessor. The programmers have concentrated on a system it has dubbed World Active Supervisor, which greatly helps the management of the environment and camera views, as well as reducing polygon distortion (which was a noticeable problem in the original title) using a minimal amount of memory. Furthermore, loading times have been improved.

Apart from technical improvements, the most obvious change is *Overblood 2*'s proposed increase in size, which is reflected in the inclusion of 160 maps, 71 musical tracks, voice samples from 19 actors, and a copious amount of cut-scenes.

At present, Riverhillsoft is hard at work on the enemies, plus the item system which features heavily throughout the game. The control system has been simplified, and the final version will support Sony's dual analogue control, with one of the thumb pads taking care of the character's movements, and the other controlling the game camera.

As in the original, players will use a variety of items, including fireproof boots, clothes, weapons, and even a grappling hook.

In graphical terms, things look generally improved, with the action now taking place in more varied locations with smaller characters, and more colourful backgrounds. Riverhillsoft has released little in terms of plot, but what *is* there is expected to be completely altered by the time this promising title is released in Japan in early 1998. E



As well as boasting improved graphics, *Overblood 2* now also has a more varied assortment of locations, including some outdoor action (above)

F1 RACING SIMULATION

MANY TITLES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO BETTER F1GP2'S ASTUTE MIX OF EXCITEMENT AND REALISM; UBI SOFT'S CHALLENGER COMES ARMED WITH AN OFFICIAL LICENSE AND A WELTER OF REALISTIC STRATEGIC ELEMENTS



Focusing on 3D accelerators has enabled Ubi Soft's designers to capture the essence of Monaco – tight and sinuous, with a wealth of trackside scenery





So the bloated grid of F1-based racing games is swelled by another new entrant. Ubi Soft boasts that *F1 Racing Simulation* will offer 'the ultimate racing experience' – and so it must, in order to carve out a niche alongside establishment goliaths like *F1* and *F1GP2*.

Judging by its wealth of set-up options – everything from tyre camber to the angle of steering lock can be tweaked – *F1 Racing* intends to top Geoff Crammond's classic. The engine's rev limit can be nudged skyward at the expense of reliability, while tyre choice, pitstop timing and refuelling strategy can all be determined before the race starts and are crucial to success in 'realistic' mode. Fortunately, those unwilling to dabble in the science of set-up are catered for by an arcade-style 'easy' option.

The depth and complexity of the 'realistic' mode is inspired, offering a hitherto-unseen taste of the sport's behind-the-scenes gamesmanship. Fully licensed by the FIA, the title features most of the cars and drivers from the 1996 season, with the notable exception of Jacques Villeneuve (who refuses to put his name to such products). However, all this effort was undermined in the version **Edge** was shown by the cars' sluggish, unresponsive handling model; attempting to spear the apex of a corner any tighter than a gentle sweep and the cars either clobbered the kerb and launched into a lazy spin, or overshot into the gravel trap beyond.

Neither was the AI of the other competitors well-executed. **Edge** observed numerous inconsistencies in their behaviour, including foolish collisions and absurdly early braking. The auto braking is over-zealous, too.

Ubi Soft has promised to address these problems, though, and if it does *F1 Racing Simulation* could be a fine game. All of the circuits have been painstakingly mapped (the rendition of the blind-browed entry to Imola's Aqua Minerale chicane is particularly impressive), right down to advertising hoardings, and the engine's saw-edged wall is sampled from a real Renault F1 unit. To surmount *F1GP2* at the pinnacle of the genre, though, Ubi Soft must be prepared to offer more than just lustrous visuals.

Format:	PC
Publisher:	Ubi Soft
Developer:	In-house
Release:	December
Origin:	France





F1 Racing Simulation **offers an array of camera angles, both in the game itself and during replays**

EXTREME-G

As the latest entrant in the contest to deliver the definitive racing experience on the Nintendo 64, Extreme-G is the first to opt for a Wipeout-style futuristic setting







Still frames such as these obviously can't convey the speed at which the game runs. Tunnel sections (right) are, unsurprisingly, the quickest of all





***Extreme-G* offers a broad variety of multiplayer options**

With the much anticipated *F-Zero 64* drawing ever closer, it's fortunate for *Extreme-G*'s publisher, Acclaim (and the developer responsible for the title, Croydon-based Probe), that the game looks set to hit the streets before Nintendo's sure-fire hit. However, with fast multiplayer action and an unusually heavy emphasis on weaponry and combat, *Extreme-G* has more to offer than merely its punctual release.

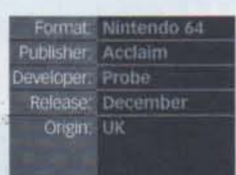
Glancing over these screenshots, any vaguely knowledgeable gamer should recognise the source of inspiration for Probe's title. After playing a near-complete rendition of *Extreme-G*, **Edge** can confirm that the only major feature that differentiates it from *Wipeout* is its choice of craft – 'Akira'-style motorbikes rather than spacecraft. Disappointingly, many of the tracks bear a marked resemblance to those in the Psygnosis title, all the way down to large chevrons on the tracks' surface. There are innovative touches, though; one of the circuits includes a loop-the-loop section, while another contains pipe sections allowing the player to ride upside down.

Aside from this, and a higher complement of tracks, *Extreme-G*'s key advantage over *Wipeout* is its selection of multiplayer modes. Up to four contestants can take part in activities that include head-to-head, battle modes, and a curious flag-collecting game. Also, the twoplayer modes have an option which allows the player to toggle between a vertically or horizontally split screen, although most players will prefer the more traditional horizontal variant.

Until *F-Zero 64* delivers its promise of light-speed gameplay, *Extreme-G* will be one of the fastest racers on Nintendo's machine, although the version **Edge** has played suffers marked slowdown when any explosions take place. This is a shortcoming that must be addressed swiftly, as crossing the finishing line first depends on astute use of whatever weapons fall into the players' hands.

Extreme-G's music is surprisingly good, delivering trance-influenced beats which are fitting considering its heritage. The visuals, though, are cursed by the slightly muddy look that afflicts several N64 titles. That didn't hurt *Mario Kart 64*, however, and with its bevy of bikes, tracks and modes, *Extreme-G* ought to attract attention.

Format:	Nintendo 64
Publisher:	Acclaim
Developer:	Probe
Release:	December
Origin:	UK





With firepower that would bankrupt any third-world state, the combat is frantic





ELRIC

ONE OF THE OLDEST GAMING THEMES IN THE BOOK IS BEING WHEELED OUT AGAIN IN ELRIC, AN ALL-ACTION ADVENTURE BASED ON THE FANTASY WRITINGS OF MICHAEL MOORCOCK







Some of *Elric's* scaleable magic effects look truly devastating

Videogame producers have long held a fascination with swords'n'sorcery themes. The craze of pencil-and-paper RPGs such as D&D saw many of the early text-only computer adventures set their action in similar worlds. Now, well over a decade later, interest in the genre shows no sign of abating, as *Elric* demonstrates.

Based on a character created by fantasy writer Michael Moorcock in his book 'Young Kingdoms', *Elric* places the player in control of the game's eponymous hero. Shunning any RPG pretensions, developer Haiku Studio has focused on creating an action-oriented title for one or two players. The result of this a fully explorable landscape, with the characters able to run, jump and climb around the isometric 3D game world.

No decent swords'n'sorcery-inspired game would be complete without a range of spells (or in this case 'runes') with which to combat the forces of evil. In the search for his lost lady love Cylmoril, Elric can collect and use four types of rune, each of which having 16 grades of power. Action takes place over nine worlds, the first eight of which are accessible from a central hall, in a similar fashion to *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*.

With isometric/overhead-viewed action games getting thinner on the ground, Psygnosis and Haiku Studio look capable of filling a valued niche with an interesting and alternative product. ∈

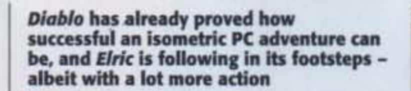






In a polygon-crazy world it's easy to forget just how much detail can be implemented when using bitmap graphics, as these shots demonstrate





***Diablo* has already proved how successful an isometric PC adventure can be, and *Elric* is following in its footsteps – albeit with a lot more action**





Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Psygnosis
Developer:	Haiku Studio
Release:	Winter
Origin:	France

BOMBERMAN FIGHT

Arriving after the over-ambitious Nintendo 64 interpretation, the Saturn-only Bomberman Fight has some way to go in repairing the reputation of the legendary series



The traditional use of walls (above) bodes well for the expansion, but hopefully not decimation, of *Bomberman*'s gameplay in isometric 3D



Unlike *Baku Bomberman*, *Bomberman Fight* uses bombs which explode in traditional lines





Some great power-ups are on offer in the game, including a super bomb (above)

After the massive disappointment of N64 title *Baku Bomberman* (see page 80), HudsonSoft has its work cut out convincing gamers that it hasn't lost its touch. Saturn owners may find poetic justice in learning that the latest incarnation of the Bomberman series – for their less powerful machine – sticks with the original formula.

Bomberman Fight's concession to modern technology is to place its action on an isometric playfield, which is limited in size in order to maintain the intensity in the action. HudsonSoft has given Bombermen the ability to jump around the *Q*Bert*-style arenas, plus a dash control suited to avoiding bombs with a quick turn of pace.

As with all the games in the series, the real meat of the game lies in its multiplayer mode, and *Bomberman Fight*'s name alone gives it much to live up to. While not even coming close to the tenplayer action available in the last Saturn *Bomberman* excursion, *Fight* at least equals the 16bit console versions' four-up matches.

The extra dimension is best used in stages where walls between areas are installed, as combatants can throw bombs over at one another. Various power-ups and special weapons will appear during fights, including an extra-powerful gigantic bomb. Players will also have a selection of 15 Bombermen to choose from, although it is unclear at this stage whether these will have different abilities, and whether or not those eliminated from contests will be able to influence the on-going action, as in *Baku*.

With seemingly no end in sight for the *Bomberman* series, this new Saturn title appears to recognise that the core appeal of the games is their frantic, full-on action – leaving N64 owners looking a little like the guinea pigs of the 3D world...

Format:	Saturn
Publisher:	HudsonSoft
Developer:	In-house
Release:	November
Origin:	Japan





Although these stages look relatively basic for a 32bit title, such simplicity was what made the original *Bomberman* games great. It will be interesting to see how this Saturn-only release stacks up against the new Nintendo 64 version

SCREAMER RALLY

THE PC HAS NEVER BEEN SHORT OF DRIVING GAMES – ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE GENERALLY WORKED WITHIN THE SERIOUS CONFINES OF FORMULA ONE. VIRGIN'S LATEST IS ATTEMPTING TO DRAG THE GENRE INTO THE ROUGH



The use of 3D acceleration has done wonders for *Screamer Rally*'s arcade-like visuals, which now move at an impressive and heart-quickening rate









This latest *Screamer* title hopes to follow in its predecessor's tracks

When *Screamer* first appeared at the end of 1995, PC owners looking for arcade-style racing games were hardly in a position where they were spoilt for choice. The majority of driving titles were either tedious simulations or compared unfavourably with that available for the console scene. Italian codeshop Graffiti's urban racer went some way to redress the balance and led the PC racing revolution.

A lot has happened since *Screamer* first powerslid its way into the PC world, but developer Milestone (having changed its name from Graffiti) is convinced that the time is right to push its 3D racing expertise in a quite different direction.

Screamer Rally, as its name suggests, has swapped the comforting grip of tarmac tracks in favour of far more slippery surfaces. Seven levels will see players struggling to keep their car on the road over a variety of international locations such as China, Canada, England, Columbia, Italy and the US. After choosing one of the five cars on offer, players can either engage in time trials, single races or a championship against the other teams.

Once all courses are completed, a mirror mode becomes available, effectively doubling the number of tracks. Furthermore, a splitscreen and network option supporting up to six players should also extend the game's lifespan considerably.

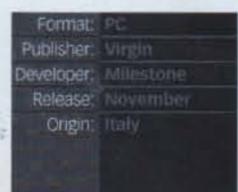
The near-complete version **Edge** has played looks promising, with suitable arcade-style handling accompanied by great visuals courtesy of 3D acceleration, all moving at a very reasonable pace. Whether or not the finished version will have enough finesse to challenge the likes of *V-Rally* and *Sega Rally* remains to be seen, however.







The arcade-style handling of the cars means that controlling them is initially intuitive, although mastering them is another matter (above)



Format:	PC
Publisher:	Virgin
Developer:	Milestone
Release:	November
Origin:	Italy

BUST A MOVE

DID THE DESIGNER BEHIND PARAPPA THE RAPPER KNOW JUST WHAT HE WAS STARTING? NOW ENIX IS PICKING UP ON THE BANDWAGON WITH A PLAYSTATION GAME BASED NOT ON TOASTING BUT DANCING





The presentation, music and the backgrounds all combine to present players with a suitably upbeat atmosphere as characters battle on the dancefloor





Each of the 12 characters comes from a different musical background

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Enix
Developer:	In-house
Release:	TBA
Origin:	Japan

As a longtime Nintendo devotee, Enix (just like SquareSoft before it), shocked 1995's Tokyo Game Show attendees with the announcement that it would be developing a line-up of games for Nintendo's competitors, revealing that the *Dragon Quest* series – one of the biggest-selling, and therefore hottest, RPG properties in the world – would be continued on the PlayStation, not the Nintendo 64.

But its 32bit line-up will include a more diverse selection of genres that merely RPGs, and *Bust a Move* is a perfect example of the company's wish to move into other areas.

Similar in concept to Sony's highly original and amusing *Parappa the Rapper*, two dancers must compete against each other by performing the best combinations of moves.

Twelve polygon-generated characters are available, each belonging to its own specific musical style. The game's music itself, a clutch of hip-hop tracks, is suitably upbeat, while colourful backgrounds match the visuals as the camera spins frantically around the central characters.

Although still at the early stages of development, it seems that the game will see players facing different competitors as they progress through the stages. And rather than simply imitating their opponents, they will have to put on the best possible dance routines with a series of moves performed in a way similar to that of combination attacks in beat 'em ups.

Bust a Move is the latest in a new genre to emerge in Japan, currently being labelled by the local press as 'rhythm action games'. The genre began life with Sega's *Digital Dance Mix*, which allowed fans of famous Japanese singer Namie Amuro to choreograph her dance routines and then watch a polygonal version of the pop star go through the motions.

With its dynamic camera angles, strong characters and the evergreen popularity of hip-hop, Enix's game could prove to be hugely successful novelty title. E



Moves are achieved in a similar fashion to how specials are unleashed in beat 'em ups

TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

For many years, the British Touring Car Championship has offered superior thrills to Formula One; now, finally, a game emerges to exploit the potential of the sport





The attention to detail is commendable, 3Dfx's Voodoo chipset having been used excellently







Eight manufacturers, including Renault, Audi and Honda, are featured





The PlayStation version suffers in visual terms yet retains the superb levels of playability

Formula One may be the most prestigious motor sport, but that doesn't make it the most exciting. That honour must surely belong to the British Touring Car Championship, where more overtaking occurs in one 20-lap race than during a whole season of F1. Cars continuously jostle for position, and contact between the highly competitive drivers often results in major incidents.

CodeMasters obviously realised this and quickly grabbed the licence to produce the only official game of the 1997 Touring Car season. *TOCA Touring Car Championship* features this year's 16 drivers racing on all eight circuits, which include Silverstone, Donington Park and Brands Hatch.

The attention to detail goes further than mere statistics; the cars are realistically modelled (and look particularly impressive in the 3D-accelerated PC version), while the tracks are painstakingly recreated. In audio terms, most of the sound effects have been sampled from raw experience at real events.

Furthermore, the cars' handling is equally realistic, with impressive suspension dynamics allowing for four-wheel drift when cornering, varied traction depending on the terrain, or massive powerslides and huge crashes when things don't go according to plan. Should such incidents arise, any impact will leave its mark as the cars suffer from realtime panel deformation.

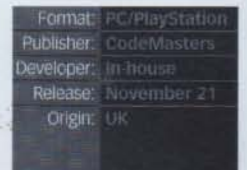
The usual single race, time trial and championship modes apply, as well as a fourplayer splitscreen mode and eightplayer network option for the PC. PlayStation owners have a choice between a horizontal or vertical splitscreen twoplayer option.

Weather conditions such as rain, fog, snow are also implemented and affect how far a driver can see in front of the car, as well as making control far more treacherous. Here, too, particular attention has been paid to the game's realism, with seemingly trivial effects such as lights reflecting off the wet track surface, or illuminating the mist surrounding them during foggy conditions.

TOCA Touring Car Championship looks mightily impressive. On current form, it's set to be the next big thing in the ever-popular racing game arena.



Every aspect of *TOCA*, from the tracks' undulation and layout to the cars' handling, has been modelled on their bespoilered real life counterparts



Format:	PC/PlayStation
Publisher:	CodeMasters
Developer:	In-house
Release:	November 21
Origin:	UK

EHRGEIZ

After testing the water with its Tobal beat 'em up series, Square's Dream Factory is back with Ehrgeiz, a System 12-powered fighting game bound for the arcades via Namco



The beat 'em up genre is screaming out for an injection of fresh ideas, and it will be interesting to see if *Ehrgeiz* can realise its innovations successfully





On its release, SquareSoft's *Tobal No.1* baffled fighting game traditionalists with its grapple-based combat. Its much improved sequel had a better reception, although many gamers still found it hard to associate the RPG maestros with a beat 'em up. However, one Mr Ishii – a lead programmer at *Tobal* developer Dream Factory – originally worked on the *Tekken* games. In an ironic twist, his latest creation is to be released in the arcades by Namco, his former employer, on the PlayStation-friendly System 12 board.

Following the precedent set by Konami's *Fighting Wu-Shu*, *Ehrgeiz* has (as yet) only four playable characters. As in the *Tobal* games, much emphasis has been placed on offbeat and diverse gameplay elements; action can occur at either close or long range through the use of grappling moves or projectiles. Players will also be able to use a special escape button at certain points in order to break out of prolonged struggles. Provided these elements are carefully balanced so as not to favour one style of play, *Ehrgeiz* should offer considerably more variety than its contemporaries.

Ehrgeiz also pushes the fighting game envelope by splitting the 'ring' into two floors. First seen in the PlayStation title *Bushido Blade*, this concept has enormous potential for advancing the fighting game genre, and is one that **Edge** would like to see explored further. Bearing this in mind, Dream Factory's experimentation with varying distances in combat begins to make a lot of sense.

The only unfortunate result of distancing the action is that it becomes less intense, something Ishii and his team were anxious to address. As a result, players can now employ background objects as weapons – climbing on top of crates to attack from above, or simply shoving them at the other combatants.

With *Tekken 3* still massively popular in Japanese arcades, *Ehrgeiz*'s shared heritage should guarantee it some attention, regardless of any gameplay innovations. Sure enough, it mimics the strong characterisation, striking design and fluid animation of its cousin. If it can bask in even a little of the glory of the *Tekken* franchise, success is assured.





The introduction of projectiles should vary the range of gameplay

Format:	Arcade
Publisher:	Namco
Developer:	Dream Factory
Release:	Late '97
Origin:	Japan



No beat 'em up is complete without a collection of gravity-defying throws

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH

BY FILLING THE TRACKS OF ITS ARCADE RACING GAME WITH MULTIPLE ROUTES, ATARI CREATED A TITLE WITH ENOUGH LONGEVITY TO MAKE IT SUITABLE FOR CONVERSION TO HOME FORMATS. MIDWAY HAS OBLIGED



While the Nintendo 64 can't compete with the twin 3Dfx chip power of the original, Midway has maintained a high level of detail in the conversion









A dual camper van collision (above) – every hippie's nightmare

Format:	N64/PlayStation
Publisher:	Midway
Developer:	In-house
Release:	December (N64)
Origin:	US

Circumventing the desire to imitate *Sega Rally*, Midway has instead chosen to convert Atari's off-beat arcade racer, *San Francisco Rush*, to the N64 and PlayStation. The arcade original was notable for two features: having smooth (if not spectacularly swift) visuals, and for a novel gameplay facet which enabled the player to take shortcuts through the tracks. No home format can compete with the power of an arcade board, leaving any reasonable conversion to stand or fall on the quality of its gameplay. Having seen the N64 version, **Edge** can report that both visuals and, more importantly, playability have survived the translation fairly well.

As with many new N64 titles, *San Francisco Rush* will be Rumble Pak compatible, with vibrations being used to signify the tightening of a corner as well as collisions. In many ways an ideal candidate for conversion to Nintendo's machine thanks to its old-school arcade feel and brightly coloured game environment, *San Francisco Rush* has a wealth of features to prolong the life of the game in the home. Aside from the usual selection of viewpoints and manual or automatic gearboxes, the game contains eight cars to choose from in four categories – Beginner, Advanced, Expert, and Extreme. Visually, there's a decent variation between the vehicles, with a VW Camper, a Beetle, and a Mercedes saloon accompanying the usual array of bespoilered racing machines.

The six tracks on offer are all based in and around the game's eponymous location, they hold the key to *San Francisco Rush*'s appeal. In arcade form the game required a sizeable quantity of pound coins to discover all of the secret routes across the city, and so the home versions will feature enough discoveries to hold a console owner's attention for enough time to justify their outlay.

Racing down the hilly streets of the city produces some spectacular jumps, resulting in some particularly over-the-top sensations of 'floating' through the air.

Midway has also included a twoplayer mode, which combines a reasonable turn of speed and graphical detail. But then **Edge** can't help feeling that with the imminent arrival of *Lamborghini 64*, *Diddy Kong Racing* and *Extreme-G* on the N64, and the PlayStation market already swamped with racing titles, *San Francisco Rush* needs to offer gamers all it possibly can.







Early attempts at *SFR* result in frequent loss of control (above). The twoplayer mode has been implemented competently (right)

redlemon



As the videogame industry groans beneath the weight of a proliferation of huge conglomerates, it's enlivening to come across a new development outfit with a refreshingly zealous approach to interactive entertainment

Sitting among the abundance of stainless steel, glass and varnished floorboards that doubles as a slick, minimalist and hence rather trendy Glaswegian cafe is somehow appropriate as **Edge** meets Red Lemon Studios' three directors: **Andy Campbell**, **Andy Findlay**, and **Laurent Noël**.

All three previously worked at Gremlin, where they started to talk about the possibility of establishing a new company which would allow them to pursue their own game ideas. All this became reality when, in the summer of 1996, and a good deal closer to the Arctic Circle, Red Lemon Studios set up business in Glasgow. Half a year, one award, two publishing deals and 14 staff members later, things are looking promising.

'Essentially, we're a bunch a people who have written games since the year dot, and we simply want to create a situation for ourselves where we can continue to write the best games,' states Noël, 'in particular we want to create a situation for all of our staff so that we get quality people in.'

'We could have gone to publishers saying we wanted to do a football game, and they would have said, "Bloody hell, the guys that did *Actua Soccer* and *Euro '96* – great, we'll take it," and we could have got a good deal out of that,' explains Campbell. 'But we consciously decided not to follow that path. We didn't want to pigeonhole ourselves. So the two games we have in development right now are totally different from each other, as well as being unlike any sports genre that's out there as well.'



Aironauts **features realtime dynamic lighting with over 200 light sources (PC shot)**

Noël goes on to explain part of the firm's philosophy: 'We don't want to be locked into genres – being "those boys who did football games" – which could easily happen given our background,' he says. 'We would have got bored and the whole thing would have seemed dead after a maybe a couple of successful products – the air of difference is very key here.'





Fogging has been avoided in order to lower the polygon count (PC shots)

Brave words, and indeed such an approach in a market dominated by endless sequels and genre regurgitation is commendable. But with some 40 man years and 16 titles' worth of collective experience at his disposal, Campbell is confident the team can deliver on its promises.

'We feel that having successfully pioneered new technology in the past, such as realtime use of motion capture, that this type of innovative attitude toward development is critical to moving forward, and to creating original titles,' he explains. 'Our technical side has always been very strong, borne out by the performance of features like the 3D engine and fast, optimised code, as well as the AI.'

'We feel we can bring all these qualities to a different genre – all those components are part and parcel of any game really – and we feel we've got the quality to actually do anything we want. We're not forced to do something we've done in the past because we've got a wealth of experience in-house,' he adds.



Andy Findlay, director

Andy Campbell, director

Laurent Noël, director

JP Cossigny, lead programmer

Michael Kane, lead artist

The result of this independence as far as game design is concerned can be seen running on a PC and a PlayStation back at the company's headquarters – over 2,000 square feet within the Strathclyde University Incubator. *Aironauts*, the company's first title, is best described as a mixture of genres, with a plot to match: it's the future, and prisons are at full capacity, unable to cope with the convicted elements of a violent society. To cope with this excess, huge city-sized criminal containment areas are set up to hold some of the most dangerous individuals for use as guinea pigs – subjects in unpleasant and often covert experiments financed by huge corporations.

One such corporation is S.K.P.T.V. – The Freedom Network, responsible for the popular TV show 'Aironauts' in which eight selected criminals battle against each other as they fly above the world's toughest containment facilities. The lucky winner walks away free, whereas losers are unlikely to ever walk anywhere again.

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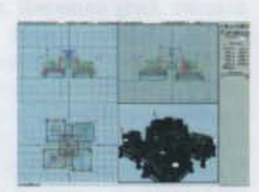
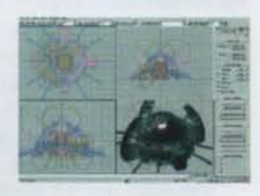




Points are awarded for aerial stunts as well as gunning down rivals (PC shots)

The game's dark and seedy futuristic world and characters are the responsibility of *Aironauts*' game designer **Ed Campbell** and lead artist **Michael Kane**, who cites the rejuvenated Batman comics as one of his main influences. Indeed, one glance at the colourful yet menacing characters and the similarities between these and Gotham City's darkest, most deranged hoodlums become instantly apparent.

'We've tried to present a coherent design strategy all the way through, from level design right through to the look of the characters,' explains Kane, 'keeping in mind that our main goal is to produce an arcade game and therefore not make it too fancy so that the front end allows you to get into the game really easily and quickly.'

The levels, designed in *3D Studio*, are large and complex, open structures offering players plenty of areas to hide from or ambush passing enemy

Inspiration for *Aironauts* sprang from the bitter disappointment of playing countless flight sims that promised exciting dogfighting action, yet delivered a lacklustre experience at best. The emphasis is therefore on action, with players attempting to outscore their competitors either by shooting them down, performing stunts and combos or completing mini missions while making sure they themselves are not taken out by any of the other psychopaths in the arena.

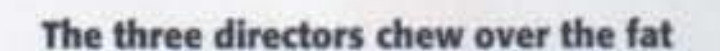
'We have successfully pioneered new technology in the past, and this innovative attitude is critical to developing new, original titles'

'The gameplay is essentially an attempt to take the one-on-one combat that everyone likes from the *Dooms* and the *Quakes* of the world but to take it into a new area of full three-dimensional combat,' enthuses Noël, who is also the project's lead programmer. 'The idea is to take the power ups, the weapons and range of characters that we know from other games and to put them in a small environment to kill each other – that's it.'

Aware of the fact that one of the best aspects of first-person shoot 'em ups is the multiplayer option, Red Lemon Studios has included a link-up facility for the PlayStation, as well as splitscreen and network options on the PC. Single players, however, have not been forgotten.

'We've jazzed up the environments,' explains Campbell. 'We've included bonuses, power ups and ultra hoops because you've got to look at entertaining the public. So while you're flying about you might think, "I can get a few extra thousand points by doing a double loop corkscrew through these things here," but if you go for it you must accept the risk that someone else will shoot you down.'

The fully Gouraud-shaded environments are made up of 15,000 polygons, encompassing 8 characters with a 500 polygon count each. However, the most visually arresting element is the absence of fogging, which affords players an extraordinary field of view and provokes a sense of depth rarely experienced in videogames – especially if the player flies up to the 'ceiling'. According to **Jean-Paul Cossigny**, lead programmer for the PlayStation version, the 3D environment was the most difficult aspect to implement. 'Some of these polygons are huge, and get


The three directors chew over the fat



more complex as you get closer, and there's virtually no distortion.'

Despite the impressive polygon counts, particularly for the PlayStation and unaccelerated PC versions, Noël prefers to keep things in perspective. 'With the advances of the new, more powerful consoles and powerful 3D cards within PCs, in some respects generating and shifting huge numbers of polygons around is not very clever any more – anyone can do it, there's a huge amount of hardware around to do that,' he professes with genuine modesty. 'We're going to start looking at where the next technical challenges really live, and I wonder ten years from now whether people will forget about polygon counts and be talking about the number of fully autonomous characters or whatever the next buzzword will be. We're trying to shift away from considering polygon count as the only issue – though we've got some nice polygon counts as well.'

While Noël claims to be disinterested in the issue of polygon counts, a mention of AI certainly sets his juices flowing. 'The AI we're developing for the computer

'In some respects, generating and shifting huge amounts of polygons isn't very clever – anyone can do it, and there's hardware to do it for them'







The characters and backgrounds were influenced by 'Batman' (PS shots)

characters, which is important for the oneplayer game, is really something quite new,' he enthuses. Initial fears that the game would require levels of AI that might prove too demanding of current technology were dispelled after a lengthy brainstorming session. 'Essentially, we've got to manoeuvre these computer characters around in a fully three-dimensional environment and choose a number of different options for them – which is tactically very, very complex, but you can't avoid it. You've got to have something that works as if players are fighting against humans, giving them an immersive experience. If the computer always reacts in the same way to certain stimuli, the player will soon get bored.

'So we're really trying to take that some way forward – We can talk about the technology and the number of polygons and stuff like that all day, but I'd like to put forward the fact that AI is a significant programming task. The number of polygons you're shifting is important, and that's got to be up to scratch, but soon people are going to realise that AI is an overhead they can't ignore.'

Red Lemon Studios' premises is cloaked with an almost tangible feeling of quiet confidence. According to the company's third director, its strength lies in the ability to accurately evaluate itself. 'We recognise what we're good at and so we focus on that,' claims Andy Findlay.

'But we're not really platform-consigned as it were,' interrupts Noël. 'We always make sure we have a good technical grasp of any console but I think it's possible in this day and age to write fairly generic code that works efficiently, so it's not necessary to say that we're a specialist on this or that console – I think that's just a cop out for people who can't program in general.'

Given the company's current status, its future is looking assured. But Campbell is already rejoicing in the present. 'It really is good fun, you know,' he says. 'We're in a position right now where, financially, we've made the right decision.'

Findlay is equally bullish, yet takes a broader view: 'We want to see the Red Lemon logo on the box as a brand of quality entertainment,' he says. 'When people see it, they will be assured that it's going to be a good game to play. We want to follow in the footsteps of developers like Bullfrog and Westwood, then take it further – that's where we're headed.' E







The sense of depth is impressive – players can fly right up to the 'ceiling' and peer down into the murk (PS shots)



Girl Trouble

Things have changed since Lara Croft first tooled up for action in *Tomb Raider* – now gamers cannot move for silicone-pumped silicon chicks. Why? **Edge** investigates...

The videogame industry has always had a difficult relationship with women. In the early days, they were banished from the gaming universe altogether or only included as trophies – objects of desire for the determinedly masculine hero to rescue at the end of a level. Sadly, even when cast as lead characters, they rarely fared any better. *Gauntlet*'s Valkyrie, for example, represented the standard D&D fantasy (short skirt, heaving chest, flowing blond hair) while Samus Aran, the heroine of *Super Metroid*, would strip to her underwear if players finished the game within two hours. Which, as far as **Edge** can recall, never happened to Mario.

So have things got any better over the last few years? The simple answer is: not much. Admittedly there are now more high-profile female characters in videogames than ever before, but they all seem to be constructed around very simple aesthetic stereotypes. In the east, its all giggling school girls and sailor uniforms (see boxout), but in the west the recipe appears to be bee-sting lips, a micro-thin waist and voluminous, pneumatic breasts.

Lara Croft is the obvious example. Since *Tomb Raider*'s debut in November '96, the fearless adventurer has graced countless videogame magazine covers sporting her instantly recognisable uniform of skin-tight vest and combat hot pants. She's even appeared in a fashion shoot for lifestyle mag *The Face* and has had a real-life presence in the form of 22-year-old actress Rhona Mitra. Over recent months, Mitra has appeared as Lara at various videogame events and, perhaps most importantly in terms of PR, on the cover of *Loaded*-with-slightly-longer-words men's mag *FHM* with the triumphant declaration: 'Awesome! *Tomb Raider*'s game girl in the flesh'.

Elsewhere, Lara wannabes are not hard to find. Eidos Interactive's own *Deathtrap Dungeon* features Red Lotus, for example, whose leather one-piece must cause some serious chafing, and then there's *Dark Earth*'s Delia (left) whose medieval bikini (two small metal discs acting merely as nipple covers) defies most physical laws. Finally, Nadia from *Nightmare Creatures* hunts monsters in a low-cut, frilly red top – all of which conveniently highlights another defining characteristic of the videogame female: wholly inappropriate clothing. As **Kim Blake**, a producer at Gremlin, states, 'A perfect example is a cut-scene in *Terminator: Future Shock* which shows a group of military personnel discussing strategy. All the men wear black tunics and trousers, but the woman in the scene wears a black bra top!'. Realism, it seems, doesn't get a look in.

Not that female characters are completely alone in being stereotyped, of course. Videogame males can be equally two-dimensional, most slotting neatly into the musclebound 'lone soldier' category. Look around hard enough, though, and plenty of other examples present themselves: George Stobbard, the preppy student hero of *Broken Sword*, Kent the ginger waster from *Normality Inc.*, *Guybrush* the geeky pirate failure from *Monkey Island*, and of course Mario the plumber. There's no way a short, unattractive female character would ever bag the star role in game, let alone attain the cult status accorded to Nintendo's main man.

Unsurprisingly, then, women involved in the industry are none too pleased with the way their gender is represented. When **Edge** asked Blake to describe her feelings about female videogame characters, her answer was blisteringly unambiguous: 'Either they're conspicuous by their absence or they're the usual fantasy art wet dream material.'

Andrea Griffiths, head of PR for Fox interactive, echoes these sentiments: 'Generally, females are portrayed in an overtly sexual way with huge breasts and ridiculously tiny waists. Fantasy as it may be, I find it quite disappointing that degrading and offensive images of female characters are still being promoted in games.'

It certainly seems as though large breasts are the major preoccupation of computer artists everywhere. A female programmer at Pumpkin Studios (who wished to remain anonymous) says: 'Do women like Lara Croft really exist? Can you imagine the back problems? You would need scaffolding in later life just to keep them off the floor.'

So why are the leading ladies in videogames still being portrayed and promoted in this fashion? There are two obvious explanations. First of all, the ▶



Strip Puzzle

Even puzzle games are not adverse to the odd piece of gratuitous titillation. Namco's coin-op *Dancing Eyes* requires the player to strip away tiles in order to reveal the body of the 'cyber babe' beneath.







***Dark Earth*'s Delia (above) and the two renders from never-released Scavenger title *Terminus*, share a similar stylistic debt to 'fantasy art'**





Nude Raider

While some want to see Lara Croft as some kind of feminist icon, others just want to see her naked. Consequently, there are now several websites on the Net offering doctored renders of Ms. Croft with her trademark vest and shorts removed. Meanwhile, many gamers still believer that there is a cheat in *Tomb Raider* which enables players to play as Lara in the buff. Core denies it, as well as the rumours that it started the rumours in the first place...

videogame industry is dominated by men, and the aforementioned 'wish list' of female characteristics is perhaps what developers would like to see in real life. The designer of Lara Croft, for example, has often admitted that the *Tomb Raider* star is his idea of a perfect women (and, judging by the amount of covers she's been on, he's not alone) while **Ian Livingstone**, designer of *Deathtrap Dungeon* and managing director of Eidos, has similar feelings about Red Lotus. 'She's a combination of all the girls who have caught my eye over the past 20 years,' he admits. 'Not all of the these girls were real, though. Comic books have had a big influence on her creation.'

Furthermore, as the vast majority of men's lifestyle magazines have learned in recent years, sex sells. Put a buxom wench in a game and a few saucy renders in the advertising and the sales of the title are likely to multiply exponentially (as **Kate Roberts**, animator at Corrosive Software, points out: 'Would *Tomb Raider* have sold as many copies if Lara had been wearing a nice warm jumper and tracksuit bottoms?'). Not only that, but sex also broadens the exposure of a title beyond the videogaming subculture. A significant amount of lifestyle mags and tabloid newspapers have put together



Lara Croft: feminist icon or male fantasy figure? Core believes that she is both

'battle of the computer babes' spreads featuring six or seven lusciously rendered women from different games in various states of undress.

Even when the game itself doesn't feature a single female character, publishers still decorate their ads with female eye candy. Gametek's campaign for *Battlecruiser 3000*, which featured a scantily clad Jo Guest straddling a boxed copy of the game under the headline 'She really wants it', was the sort of crass sexism which many thought had been left in the '70s, and it won the videogame industry few friends.

'Would *Tomb Raider* have sold as well if Lara had been wearing a nice warm jumper and tracksuit bottoms?'

Cheap exploitation is, unfortunately, not confined to the lower echelons of the industry. Psygnosis deployed similar tactics for its *Destruction Derby* campaign, depicting three bikini-clad models washing a bright pink tank. The *Destruction Derby 2* ads managed to top this, however, by surrounding a car and its driver with whip-wielding models dressed in leather bondage gear.

This year's ECTS was another prime example of busty models being used to attract attention to products regardless of their content. Almost all of the large-scale stands





It doesn't take a genius to work out that videogame ads are mostly aimed at men



Red Lotus is built in the Lara mould and apparently has character to match

had their own harem of scantily dressed girls, and nowhere were they more obvious than on the massive Eidos stand in the centre of the main hall. Here, the almost understandable Lara Croft-alikes mixed with women in unzipped flight suits (promoting the flight sim *Flying Nightmares 2* – just how irrelevant could Wonderbra-toting models be, exactly?), while hordes of sweaty blokes stood around waiting to get their pictures taken with the unfortunate specimens. Fox's Griffiths can barely contain her anger.

'ECTS was a prime example of our industry stooping to its lowest. For the first time ever, the event was visited by a politician,' she reveals. 'Barbara Roche, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Trade, Industry and Small Business, was invited by ELSPA to come and see how innovative, credible and important the games industry has become. My only hope was that ELSPA somehow managed to steer Ms. Roach away from the embarrassing number of stands spilling over with scantily clad females (some topless) surrounded by sad, salivating males. What an impression for her to go away with.'

Gina Jackson, a producer at Ocean, questions the usefulness of this kind of advertising altogether. 'I find things like the Jo Guest ad amusing, rather than offensive, because it makes fun of the consumer rather than women – you'd have to be pretty sad to buy the game just because Jo Guest puts it between her legs. Eidos, Virgin and Konami seem to use the "naked women sell games" routine – especially at shows – but does it encourage people to look at the girls rather than the product? Do these companies have something to hide?'

But are there any positive role models out there? Many would nominate Lara Croft as a decent videogame woman. She's strong, resourceful, intelligent (according to her blog), and her status as main character in *Tomb Raider* puts her a cut above the level of eye candy. It seems that female gamers respond to the character in a strong way; Eidos has received dozens of calls and letters from girls who have enjoyed taking control of a strong woman character for once. As **Susie Hamilton**, Core's head of PR, confirms: 'We do get a lot of emails from female game players and most of them are complimentary – in spite of Lara's visual characteristics, which will naturally appeal more to the male players out there, the female players seem to have found a certain sympathy with her character. Lara represents independence, courage of conviction and strength, but these have been incorporated into a role which still remains totally feminine. I think that when you combine Lara's no-nonsense, go-getting attitude with the above, you get something quite dynamic.'

However, as Hamilton concedes, Lara still conforms to the big lips, small waist, big boobs recipe which is rampant in the industry – and when she adorns the cover of magazines like *FHM*, it's certainly not her intelligence and strength that have put her there. On top of that, the massive media hype that her figure continues to generate has no doubt inspired yet more developers to leap aboard the 'perfect body' bandwagon.

An obvious example is Nikki from *Pandemonium*. In the first instalment of the game she was a nondescript, girlish character. Recent renders for the post-*Tomb Raider Pandemonium 2*, however, indicate she has developed a plunging cleavage Pamela Anderson would have difficulty competing with. Nikki seems to have a strong personality, ▶







Japanese beat 'em up stars Sophita, June and Nina look barely out of their teens



The Eastern approach

While Japanese game designers put scantily clad lasses in their games too (Capcom's *Final Fight*, top, being an early example), they also reveal an obsession with schoolgirls. This phenomenon has reached epidemic proportions in the world of anime and has become a beat 'em up institution. The females in *Street Fighter Ex Plus Alpha* (above), *Toshinden 3* and *Fighting Vipers*, look barely a day over 15 years old.

However, the obsession with female youth reached its nadir in *Tekken 3*. The game is set 19 years after *Tekken 2* and all the male characters have aged accordingly. But what of Nina and Anna? The story behind the game explains that they were used in a cryogenic sleep experiment, to emerge 15 years later without ageing. How very convenient.


Virtual pop star Kyoto Date, created in Japan, is based on male fantasy

though, and she remains a principal character. There are many lesser developers out there who are creating their own Lara Croft lookalikes as a gimmick to incorporate into their advertising campaigns; they don't have the imagination to actually develop a personality or to think of what a female character could add to the game. In contrast the *Tomb Raider 2* team insist that Lara has more to offer than her looks: 'Although she is obviously sexy, she is also a very strong character, and being female is actually an important part of her design; it means she relies more on agility than brute force to overcome the situations she encounters.'

Another recent character to be highlighted as a positive female presence is Twinsen's wife, Zoe, in *Little Big Adventure 2*. As Griffiths explains, 'The two prime movers in the product were husband-and-wife team Frederick and Yael Raynal, and I think the fact that a woman had such a major input is very telling in the game's sympathetic attitude toward women. In the second instalment Zoe is pregnant, just as Yael is in real life.'

As interesting as the first ever pregnant videogame character is, however, Zoe may be too much of a quantum leap for the rest of the industry to follow. In any case, many would ask why the representation of women should change at all. Men account for the purchase of about 90% of videogames, so why not just keep giving them what they want? As Eidos' Livingstone puts it, 'Games other than simulations are not meant to be realistic. They are a fantasy and that's the whole point. Girls in computer games are dream girls and we like them a lot. Dream girls are not a new idea. They have been around for years as pin-ups, starred in novels, films and comic books. Thanks to Lara Croft they have only just started to appear in computer games and I don't see why it should be a problem. There are enough stereotypical male characters in games as it is.'




Nikki, star of *Pandemonium*, seems to have sought cosmetic help for the sequel

Interestingly, though, female designers and producers are not asking for drastic changes in the way women are presented. As Blake asserts, 'I do think it's fun to have larger-than-life female characters, just so long as larger-than-life doesn't always refer to their bust!' And Griffiths pretty much agrees. 'If I were to design a female character she would be good looking, athletic and physically in proportion.'

Intelligence also seems to be at the top of the list of requirements – as **Sam Fay**, Eidos' trade marketing manager suggests, 'I'd like to see a female videogame character as the brains as well as the beauty behind the game, one of the sim management titles perhaps, but with Ms. Powersuit running a virtual pub/city/world. She'd also have to be super-intelligent, drink like a fish, command instant respect and have a great wardrobe!' In effect, no one is asking for an influx of ugly harridans – Fay and her ilk are looking for strong, beautiful lead characters who contribute toward the game rather than merely stand in the background looking sexy.

Ultimately, it seems videogame designers have nothing to lose by depicting women in a more flattering manner. Lara Croft, for example, has attracted a fresh, burgeoning audience of female gamers with her intelligence and resourcefulness, but this has been accomplished without sacrificing those undoubted physical charms which appeal to the male majority of gamers.

If other designers can spend as much time developing the personalities and in-game roles of female characters as they do developing those characters' breasts, they may reach out and tap into this much-neglected audience. Either that, or the industry can continue using female characters merely as marketing tools and slide ever further into misogyny and ignominy.

Videogame players are already largely stereotyped as sad, lonely adolescent dweebs – do developers feel it necessary to add fuel to the fire?






Jill in *Resident Evil* and Zoe in *LBA2* are positive females who don't parade around in their underwear. They are rare, however

GRAND THEFT AUTO

THE FIRST REVIEW OF DMA'S GAME OF LAW-BREAKING MAYHEM

LIBERTY CITY







***Grand Theft Auto*'s first environment, Liberty City, allows players to engage in old-fashioned gangster-related antics such as car-jacking, eliminating the competition or participating in bank robberies, in order to reach a million points**

In an industry full of sequels, yearly updates and systematic genre recycling, enough cannot be said about a new videogame release displaying that rarest of things: originality. DMA Design's *Grand Theft Auto* is one such title. As an example of an almost extinct breed, *GTA* manages to take myriad remarkably simple concepts and mould them into a thoroughly absorbing experience.

However, to simply label *GTA* as totally innovative would be unfair. Videogame history has witnessed titles with a hint of *GTA*'s approach, and the game's top-down perspective will immediately remind players of *APB*. Ironically, though, unlike Atari's cop-friendly adventure, this time around players operate on the other side of the law.

The game's premise is decisively simple: starting off as a petty crook, players must make their way through the ranks of the American criminal underworld by successfully completing various jobs. As in real life, these illegal activities encompass an impressive variety of tasks and will no doubt provide tabloids with something to fill their pages with. Nevertheless, moral issues aside – this is after all aimed at a mature audience – it's all here, from delivering stolen vehicles, driving getaway cars, and collecting protection money, to drug smuggling, blowing up government-owned buildings, and terminating gang members. Jobs are usually offered over one of the public phones located around the city, and one initial mission can lead to a variety of sub-missions, before again needing to lift a handset.

The three cities themselves are huge, with a claimed combined (to scale) 6,000 miles of multi-lane freeways, narrow city streets and suspicious alleyways. In fact, such is their scale that players are supplied with maps for each of the sprawling metropolis in order to ensure smooth navigation throughout their labyrinthine structure. Furthermore, each is based on a real US city, so that the New York-inspired Liberty City contains a much higher proportion of skyscrapers than the East Coast-situated San Andreas, with its long, red suspension bridge and steep hilly climbs, or the drug-infested streets and numerous pool equipped villas that make up the dangerous, yet picturesque, setting for the Miami-flavoured Vice City.

GTA is divided into six chapters – two per city – each with its own overall theme. So, for example, in the 'Mandarin Mayhem' chapter players assist the Chinese Mafia in their sordid deals, while in 'Bent Cop Blues' they're under the control of a corrupt drug squad officer. There are over 200 missions spread over the three levels, and a lot of those require player initiative as well as simple phone answering. Keeping an eye on the pager at the top left hand corner of the screen can prove useful as potential jobs are usually displayed after the main missions have been completed.

Naturally, successful criminal minds will reap substantial financial rewards from these missions, and once a million dollars are accumulated it's time to move on to the next chapter. However, in one more example of the unrestrictive nature of the gameplay, players are not forced to undertake the missions in order to finish the game. Of course, it makes things easier, particularly as each completed episode will multiply the score of all subsequent lawbreaking activities. Nevertheless, points are handed out for every sort of criminal undertaking, from running over police officers to stealing cars and either blowing them up or loading them onto boats at one of the city's docks. The value given for a vehicle here will depend on its type and condition, but

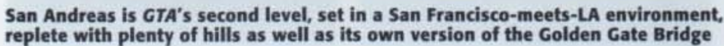


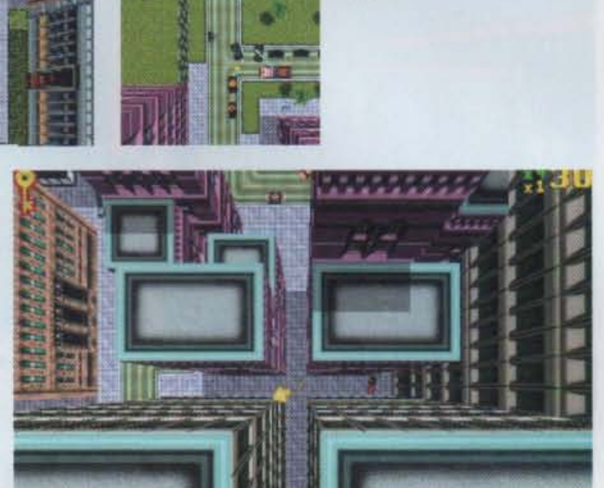


Exploding cars are likely to attract the attention of the law (left), although there are various methods of dealing with an obtrusive police force (right)

SAN ANDREAS




San Andreas is *GTA*'s second level, set in a San Francisco-meets-LA environment, replete with plenty of hills as well as its own version of the Golden Gate Bridge


All of these screenshots are taken from the 3Dfx version of the game, resulting in much improved textures and overall visuals

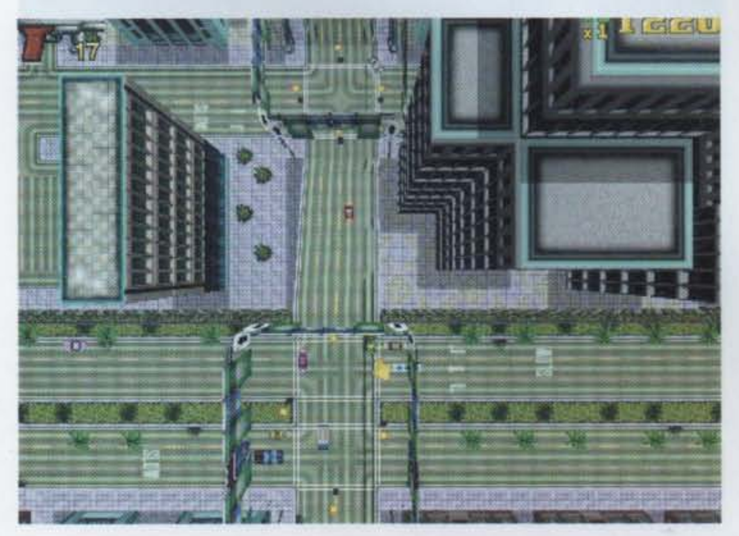
WEAPONRY QUICKLY GRADUATES FROM SIMPLE AUTOMATIC PISTOLS AND MACHINE GUNS TO FLAMETHROWERS

expect to get $18,000 for an immaculate Viper GTS Coupe.

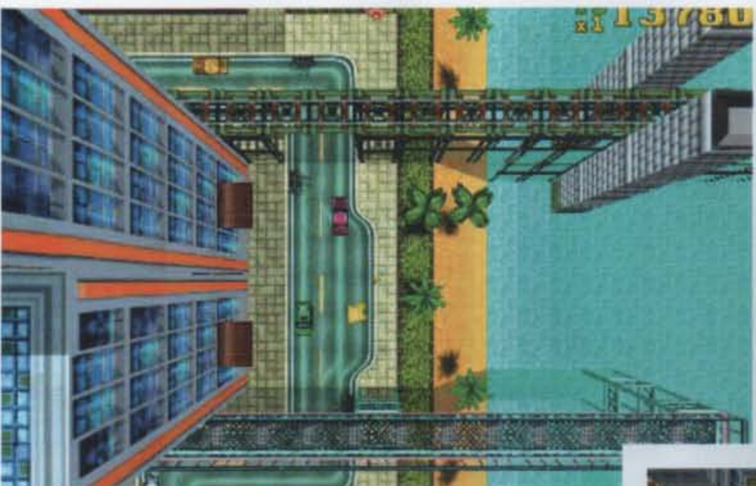
Cars are obviously central to the game's denouement. Again, had DMA only allowed players to take over the controls of 20 mundane, everyday vehicles, the experience might have been a short-lived one. However, by littering *GTA*'s streets with exotic automobiles such as Ferrari F40s, Jaguars, RS Cosworths, Porsche 911s and 356 Speedsters, the proceedings have certainly been spiced up.

Obviously, simply going around causing mindless mayhem without having to face the consequences would ultimately spoil the game. Which is why, as in reality, police are there to clamp down on any felonious activity. Other than outdriving them, players also have alternative means of protecting themselves. Smashing any of the wooden crates dotted around the city reveals helpful items such as 'get out of jail' keys, bulletproof vests, speed-increase icons, and, of course, weapons. In the early stages, these are automatic pistol and machine gun affairs but quickly graduate to flamethrowers and rocket launchers as the well-judged difficulty level increases.

Yet *GTA*'s most amazing feature has to be the level of realism and attention to detail evident throughout. Never before has the sense of being in a living city with other drivers and pedestrians going about their own business been so admirably conveyed. Blow a car up or run over a pedestrian and the fire brigade and ambulance arrive accordingly. Players may then find it hard to resist the temptation of realising a childhood dream and steal the fire engine (or ambulance, for that matter), for a quick spin around the block. This is of course possible ▶


Although the camera doesn't zoom out this far back during the game, it serves as an indication of how much attention to detail has gone into *GTA*

VICE CITY









Vice City is *GTA*'s third example of a convincingly real, living and breathing metropolis, where drug-related crimes are prevalent

◀ although it tends to seriously upset the law-keeping authorities, and with unrealistic efficiency, a cortege of squad cars will be in hot pursuit while others set up road blocks at all the surrounding major junctions.

Brave drivers will no doubt put up a fierce resistance as they engage in frantic and adrenaline-soaked car chases, which might develop into a frantic shoot-out using cars abandoned by their drivers as protection – the entire proceedings are far more exciting than anything Hollywood has ever been able to come up with. On the other hand, more conscientious drivers may wish to surrender themselves to the authorities and pay their bail in order to get back on the streets (although these individuals might never have got into trouble in the first place). However, the easiest way of dealing with the heat is to locate one of the city's paintshops and simply get the colour and number plates of the vehicle changed, instantly putting an end to the relentless, stress-inducing noise of nearby sirens.

Indeed, the sound effects are dynamic, so that a faint jingling of bells will develop into a full-on chanting session as a group of Hare Krishnas get dangerously close – still, they can always be disposed of in a variety of ways.

A further mention must go to the in-game music, which changes according to the car being driven, and includes 60 minutes of funk, techno, hip-hop, rock and even country & western. Although clearly tongue-in-cheek, their inclusion adds the final master stroke to the game's overflowing atmosphere levels.

With *GTA*, DMA has succeeded in creating a uniquely engrossing and magnificently playable title displaying the same levels of originality first witnessed in its *Lemmings* series.

It's bound to attract the public's attention for all the wrong reasons, but then it is said that all publicity is good publicity...

GTA DISPLAYS THE SAME LEVEL OF ORIGINALITY AS DMA'S LEMMINGS





The amount of variety in the game's many missions is astounding, and some will require players to visit the game's more sinister locations (above)

Edge rating:

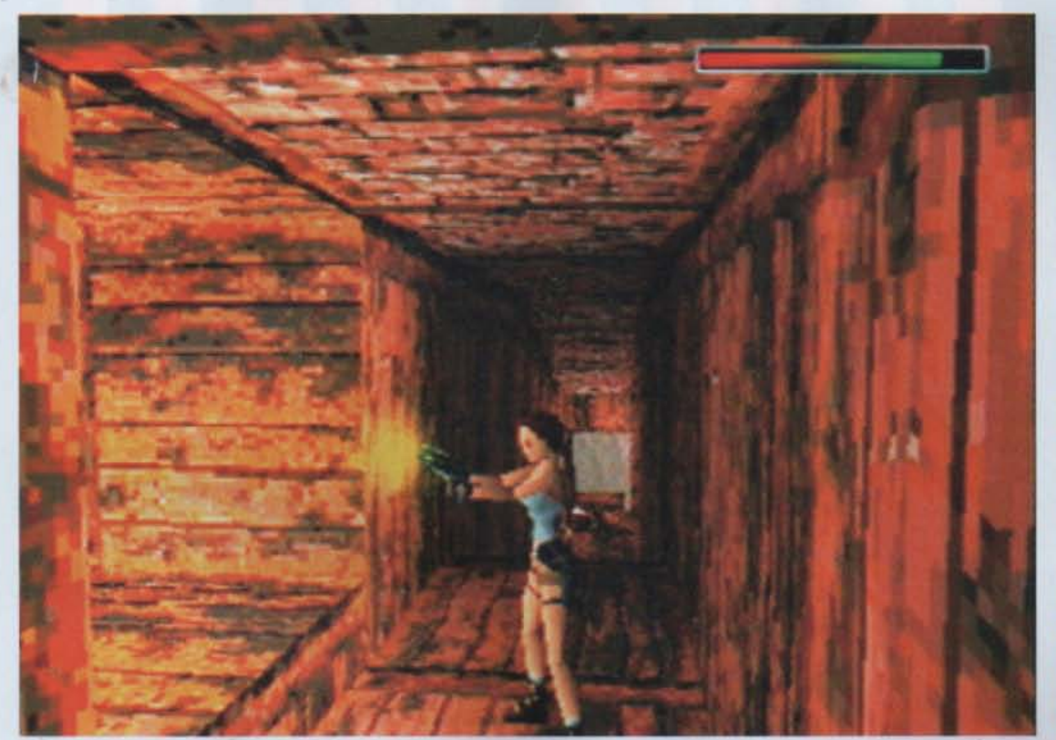
Nine out of ten



Few titles can claim to immerse players into the game world as effectively as DMA's *Grand Theft Auto*, resulting in an impressively unique experience

EDGE			
	Format: **PC (tested)/PlayStation**	Publisher: **BMG Interactive**	
	Developer: **DMA**	Price: **£40**	Release: **Out now**

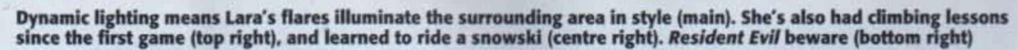
Tomb Raider **2**











Dynamic lighting means Lara's flares illuminate the surrounding area in style (main). She's also had climbing lessons since the first game (top right), and learned to ride a snowski (centre right). *Resident Evil* beware (bottom right)



The most successful videogame icon of the last year is back. Lara Croft has usurped even Mario in the public consciousness as *the* face (or at least, the body) of videogaming; a ubiquitous presence in the tabloids; a cover star of *The Face* and *FHM*; theorised about and argued over by university professors, broadcast professionals and videogame journalists. It's good to see how thoroughly the UK has got behind a interactive entertainment star of its very own.

Initially, *Tomb Raider 2* holds few surprises. The much-vaunted new textures are there to be seen, although the gloss has been taken off them in the year since *Tomb Raider*'s release by other developments in 3D gaming. There's also a discernible new zip to the 3D engine, which shunts even more polygons around at a very impressive rate. And the new dynamic lighting, which means that Lara can carry her own light sources around to illuminate gloomy levels, is beautifully executed – even in the underwater sequences. *Tomb Raider 2*'s PlayStation incarnation represents a phenomenal use of the console's meagre 2Mb RAM and is assuredly one of the most impressive games available on the platform.

But as it was last year, the real stars of the game are the improbably modelled Lara herself, the level designs and the finely judged puzzle difficulty settings. Since her last outing Lara has learned how to climb ladders, how to use flares for illumination and – perhaps most impressively of all – how to drive. This latter skill will need to be deployed successfully in several of the game's 16 vast levels. The first such moment comes early on as Lara clambers aboard a speedboat and fires up the engine. It speaks volumes for the quality of Core's 3D engine that players will, in no time at all, be zipping around the canals of Venice in a section of the game whose quality doesn't fall too far short of that of many dedicated PlayStation water-racing games. That the engine can now handle the rapid movement generated by the new vehicles is a testament to its flexibility and to the forethought with which it has been designed and realised.

In streamlining the game's 3D engine the Core team has freed up more processor time for subtle details that add to the realism of the experience. Lara's ponytail is



Huge, spinning underwater blades will suck in an unwary swimmer and make mincemeat of them



Cynics will no doubt claim that *Tomb Raider 2* isn't quite the leap forward they were expecting, but features such as all-new locations add significantly to the mix









The advent of vehicles, such as this speedboat, in the world of *Tomb Raider 2* is a significant – if not altogether unexpected – addition. Their motion has been very realistically modelled, too

now a 'living' thing. As she bends her head forward to look down it coils around her neck before sliding off; when she brings her head back up it catches on her shoulder and then slowly straightens out.

The 16 levels of *Tomb Raider 2* are, if anything, even more of a joy than those in its predecessor. They're bigger, just as well designed, and have a pleasingly contemporary feel. Whereas the first game was all empty, ancient ruins with bags of atmosphere but not all that much adrenalin-inducing action, *Tomb Raider 2* sets at least half its levels in the modern world, a world that – in comparison to the original – is teeming with people. All bad people too, armed with weapons that range from iron bars to automatics. The increase in the number of bad guys is compensated for by some new weaponry for Lara; an M16, a harpoon gun (which can, of course, be used underwater), and a grenade launcher. While not exactly turning *Tomb Raider 2* into a *Quake*-style bloodbath, the extra opposition certainly adds another edge to the wide variety of *Tomb Raider 2*'s game elements.

Tomb Raider 2 looks better than the original, packs a powerful urban punch, stretches the PlayStation in particular to new heights of coding excellence and introduces several new twists to a game that – while at heart a platformer – was nonetheless always difficult to categorise. The level of ability required to be successful is still pitched at a sufficient level to make it a challenging, but never too frustrating, experience, and the new game does even more to provide that involving, sensual, in-the-screen experience that is the hallmark of all truly excellent, immersive videogames.

Though some may see it as a conservative retread of the original, *Tomb Raider 2* is absorbing enough, detailed enough and will take long enough to master to simultaneously sate and delight the appetite of the videogame junkie. It is, in short, fabulous.

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten



The atmosphere in *Tomb Raider 2* is significantly different – urban and industrial, and much dirtier







The range of textures, locations and puzzles is even more more varied than in the original game

Format: **PlayStation**	Publisher: **Eidos**	
Developer: **Core Design**	Price: **£45**	Release: **Out now**

Top Gear Rally









The cars are well-detailed and based on real models such as Ford RS2000s, Porsche 911s, and Toyota Supras (above). It's unusual to see more than one car at any one time during the Championship mode (left, top) and in the early seasons catching up with and overtaking them is usually a fairly straightforward affair (middle)

Although the N64 leads the videogame world in several genres, no developer has yet seemed able to produce a racing title that leaves other formats eating dirt. *Top Gear Rally* is Boss Game Studios' attempt to do the honours, and while it doesn't quite make the grade, it's nearer the mark than most.

Initially, players are offered just one track and two cars to choose from. A further three circuits and eight vehicles become accessible as players progress through the game. Of course, no racing game would be complete without hidden bonuses, and *Top Gear Rally* obliges by providing an extra track together with some amusing modes of transport, including a milk van and an odd contraption in the shape of an American football helmet.

There are few surprises when it comes to modes of play. Arcade mode pits players against a CPU-controlled vehicle in a battle to reach the next checkpoint before the strict time limit runs out; Time Trial allows drivers to race their own best time in the form of a ghost car; while Championship is far more time consuming. In the latter, drivers undertake seven seasons, each comprising between two and four rounds, and a specified amount of points must be achieved before progression to the next season is allowed. The four courses remain the same – coastal, jungle, desert, and mountain – but players must endure a spread of different weather conditions (rain, fog, snow) in addition to nocturnal races.

In terms of handling, *Top Gear Rally* doesn't disappoint either. It follows the *Sega Rally* template of exaggerated arcade-style control inputs, the analogue stick making the control of the cars instantly accessible. Before long, then, players can pull off powerslides of gravel-spattering intensity. All of the normal set-up options are available; steering sensitivity, tyre choice and suspension stiffness can be tweaked in order to tailor the car's abilities to the track. Deployment of these options is



The arcade mode is a frantic and enjoyable race against time as well as the computer opponent



The replays are – unsurprisingly – very Namco-esque in their nature

All levels offer different routes or shortcuts (right) for players to undertake should they be feeling adventurous – some of them, such as the Coastline track, enable players to cut across a field or even a beach. Hazardous weather conditions (above, left) make things difficult, as does night driving (top, left)

a skill worth mastering, particularly if players wish to remain competitive against some of the faster cars that are introduced during later seasons.

Top Gear Rally boasts some striking graphical touches. Weather effects, for example, are neatly realised, as is the way each car reacts to the road surface (it's possible to differentiate between a front-, rear-, or four-wheel drive vehicle simply by observing their motion under hard acceleration). Still, however pleasing these little details are, they fail to conceal the fact that for most of the tracks, scenery is remarkably barren.

Here lies one of *TGR*'s principal weaknesses. The odd structure such as a lighthouse, motel, or windmill does hove into view occasionally, but for the vast majority there's little in the periphery to distract a player's eye from the track. This, of course, is hardly going to affect gameplay, but if intense close-contact is an important prerequisite in a racing game, the fact that no more than two other competitors can be seen at any one time (and when they do emerge they're usually accompanied by an unhealthy amount of slowdown) just might.

Although that initial disappointment resulting from the earlier cars' lack of speed has more to do with their weak specification – any fear that it's symptomatic of an absence of CPU grunt is quickly extinguished once the more powerful vehicles become available – the paucity of opposition can't be overlooked. For the most part *Top Gear Rally* is a lonely experience, interrupted by occasional, yet exciting, instances of real racing.

The game certainly has its moments, but they are scattered too few and far between to create a continuously thrilling white-knuckle ride.

The coveted (and crucial, if its sales are to compete favourably with those of the 32bit market) 'definitive N64 racing game' position remains vacant, then... E

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten







The twoplayer mode is good fun but suffers from a noticeable loss in graphical detail, with the CPU drawing distance also substantially curtailed. The playing window is also severely reduced

Format: **Nintendo 64**	Publisher: **Kemco**	
Developer: **Boss**	Price: **$6,980 (£37)**	Release: **Out now (Japan)**

Total **Annihilation**





As the game progresses, players move from one world to another, all of which have different terrains



As with all realtime strategy games, rampaging through the enemy base is the satisfying conclusion to most missions in *Total Annihilation* – but the real bulk of the gameplay lies in how the player achieves this goal

It's been a long time coming, but the realtime strategy genre – caught for so long in a stagnant cycle of me-too *Red Alert* clones – is finally being graced with games that really put the innate potential of the genre to the test. Last month saw the innovative *Dark Reign*, with its improved AI and automation routines, 3D terrain and line-of-sight systems. But even that pales in comparison to *Total Annihilation*.

Total Annihilation is set in the far future, in a universe torn apart by 4,000 years of constant warfare. The conflict began when humanity developed a process to transfer consciousness electronically into robotic bodies, causing an ideological split between those who were unwilling to give up their corporeal existence and those who rushed to embrace the new technology. Now, with their warring civilisations all but destroyed, their vast military power scattered and disheartened, and their planets barren wastelands, the forces of the Arm and the Core continue to fight in a last struggle to the death.

The immediate impact of *Total Annihilation* comes from its radical presentation. Unlike every other realtime strategy game so far, the various units and buildings of both sides are represented not by simple sprites, but by complex 3D polygons. The result is totally gripping. Everything moves smoothly and convincingly – robotic walkers stomp around, tanks tilt as they move up or across slopes, aircraft bank and roll just like real planes, and turrets turn to track the enemy. Despite their diminutive proportions, every unit and building is cleverly animated; gun barrels slam back with recoil when firing, and construction buildings open up like mechanical flowers to disgorge new units. The explosions cast debris to the four corners of the screen, bouncing off nearby units and terrain and leaving the metallic carcass of the target lying where it falls. All of this takes place against a wide variety of highly detailed terrain, from green, earthlike planets to desert worlds and volcanic infernos.

But *Total Annihilation* is more than just the best-looking realtime strategy game yet seen, it's also one of the most playable and technically advanced. As with *Dark*





Taking out the enemy's fixed defences is a vital stage in overcoming a fixed position



***Total Annihilation* is blessed with excellent graphics, especially the brilliant explosions, which scatter debris and wreckage across the screen**



Judging the right number of units to form into an attacking force is a tricky part of *Total Annihilation*



Fast-moving troops can act as spotters for longer-range artillery units and buildings, allowing them to rain down destruction from several screens away, or from behind hills and ridges

Reign, the terrain is no mere backdrop against which the fighting takes place. Instead, it forms an integral part of the action. Rolling hills, steep cliffs, mountains, ridges, and other features create a 3D map which has a significant effect on the course of the game. Slopes hamper or prevent movement of the different units, as well as blocking line of sight, while units with a height advantage are able to see and fire further. Rivers and seas, whether of water or lava, slow down or block altogether the movement of ground forces. Forests and other vegetation form natural barriers for large vehicles such as tanks while affording smaller robotic units the advantage of cover as they weave through the trees. True, *Dark Reign* realised the concept of 3D terrain first, but *Total Annihilation* presents and uses it in a far superior fashion. The excellent level of graphical detail makes it easier to see the slopes and hills, and everything is full of neat touches. Stray rounds explode against the ground or throw up splashes in the water, while trees catch fire and burn, leaving black husks behind.

The structure of the game itself is also very striking, packed with intelligent ideas and neat innovations. Both conflicting sides have around 80 different units and buildings at their disposal, an impressive number made more so by the clever balance of their strengths and weaknesses. Unlike so many realtime strategy games, *Total Annihilation* is not plagued by the existence of a small number of supremely powerful units which make their lesser brethren obsolete (and render the opposition powerless). The different combinations of spotting range, speed, manoeuvrability, speed, and terrain handling alone makes each unit unique. Added to this is the incredible combination of different weapon types, all with specific uses. Short-range, direct-fire flamethrowers, machine guns, energy bolts and lasers are ideal for use against close, fast-moving enemies. Conversely, slower-moving, longer-ranged shells arc up and over obstacles, while missiles track their targets, and so on. *Total Annihilation* is the first realtime game that not only encourages combined forces, but makes them a key to success. No one unit is without shortcomings and weaknesses, so combinations of different types work very well together. Considering the range of terrain, the possible strategies and tactics are, therefore, vast. Rather than the all-too-familiar *C&C* style of throwing massive armies against each other, *Total Annihilation* offers the ability to employ clever plans and multi-pronged attacks.

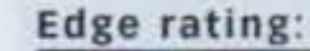
Fortunately, the game's command system and artificial intelligence enables players to make the most of the tactical potential on offer. Again, this is similar in some ways to *Dark Reign*, enabling players to set mobility and aggression levels for individual units or groups, as

THE EXPLOSIONS CAST DEBRIS TO THE CORNERS OF THE SCREEN, BOUNCING OFF NEARBY UNITS AND SCENERY AND LEAVING THE METALLIC CARCASS OF THE TARGET LYING WHERE IT LANDS

well as a variety of other settings. A wonderfully simple system also enables the player to issue multiple orders at once, which will then be followed in sequence, simply by pressing the Shift key to carry out each in turn.

The excellence of the AI extends beyond the movements of the players troops when left to their own devices; the computer opponents are as smart and tough as any realtime game so far. After the disappointing gullibility of *C&C*'s enemies, *Total Annihilation*'s cunning AI, combined with the superlative level design, offers a stiff challenge even for the most experienced gamer.

Total Annihilation, then, is the game that the realtime strategy genre has been waiting for – and waiting far too long. Its only real competition comes from *Dark Reign*, which has the edge on minor technical details such as its automated scouting. In every other respect, though, including the all-important tenet of gameplay, *Total Annihilation* wins out. A mere month after *Dark Reign* raised the bar for realtime strategy games, *Total Annihilation* leaps over it, setting a new standard for others to aim at. It is by far the most playable, challenging, addictive and plain enjoyable realtime game so far, and one that will prove hard to beat.



Edge rating:

Nine out of ten





Steep cliffs stop all but the most agile of units, protecting the base



Format: **PC**	Publisher: **GT Interactive**	
Developer: **Cavedog**	Price: **£30**	Release: **Out now**

I-War



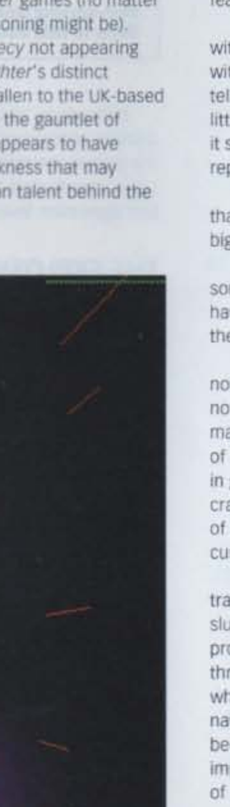
Nebulae blend into the space backdrop, producing startlingly atmospheric effects, and all totally within software





Aficionados of space combat on the PC generally fall into two groups: those who swear by LucasArts' *X-Wing* series, and those who have an allegiance to Origin's *Wing Commander* games (no matter how misplaced the latter camp's reasoning might be).

But with *Wing Commander Prophecy* not appearing until Christmas, and *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*'s distinct shortage of oneplayer missions, it's fallen to the UK-based codeshop Particle Systems to pick up the gauntlet of furthering the genre – a challenge it appears to have addressed with a confidence and slickness that may surprise the well-established American talent behind the previously mentioned games.





The radar map is confusing to read, but vectors and the HUD provide players with essential information

For not only has the team successfully married a series of incredible prerendered sequences with excellent realtime space combat, but it has also added original features of its own.

From the very start *I-War* looks like something special, with a superlative CGI intro (from which **Edge** readers can witness selected scenes on this month's cover CD) that tells the storyline leading up to the missions. At just a little under 15 minutes long, it's certainly a long haul, but it sets the tone beautifully, and, perhaps most surprisingly, represents an interesting story in its own right.

It's a beginning that underline the well-known fact that, for all the cash Origin threw at *Wing Commander IV*, big bucks will never replace raw talent.

In gameplay terms, *I-War* is a hybrid, bringing together some of the best bits from the many space games that have gone before it, with even a reverential nod towards the classic *Elite*.

Taking command of a ship that's larger than is the norm with games of this genre, players will immediately notice how differently it moves in comparison to the swift, manoeuvrable craft which scream about space in the likes of LucasArts' games. As such, it takes time – and effort – in getting used to the four thrusters used to direct the craft in battle, and it can initially appear that, in the heat of an enemy encounter, the ship is perhaps too cumbersome and prone to damage for comfort.

In reality, though, after successfully completing the training missions, players will notice not the craft's sluggishness, but rather its realistic handling, and the programmers' obvious understanding of inertia. The four thrusters allow for much more extreme twists and turns when mastered, and with the inclusion of an exhaustive navigation and engineering screen, players quickly become absorbed in the tasks of weighing up the importance of crippled shields against the consequences of damaged weapons systems.

To help guide players through space, there's also a HUD display that not only incorporates the usual, slightly confusing radar, weaponry stats, and damage reports, but also a system of vectors that traces projectiles and the paths of ships with brilliant, flowing contour lines. As would be expected, the set-up is initially a confusing prospect, but in the long term it is an inherently useful and strangely atmospheric one.

As with *TIE Fighter*, *I-War*'s all-encompassing controls come with a drawback – in this case the sheer amount of



***I-War*'s missions differ wildly from one another; from simple all-out space combat to docking with craft such as this repair tug. To be successful requires that a mastery of every aspect of the ship's many capabilities**





The scope of the game is enormous, with travel between galaxies possible via massive slipgates

keys that must be remembered in the heat of battle. Players can often feel almost as though they're being put through a rigorous typing test that would scare Mavis Beacon, but, given time, the most important keys become easy to recall when under pressure.

The 40 missions structured around the game's storyline are admirably varied, involving such aspects as the scanning and tracking of ships; all-out combat while in geo-stationary orbit; and even docking with various craft.

The most apparent aspect of *I-War*, though, is the sheer depth of the game universe. Slipgates allow players to move swiftly between galaxies, while progress to specific points can be accelerated thanks to incredibly powerful alternative thrusters. The feeling of scale is akin to that of the massive expanses of *Elite*, and it will therefore come as little surprise to learn that the 'I' in the game's title stands for 'Infinity'.

Graphically, *I-War* eclipses just about everything currently out there. In a brave move – but a commendable one, considering the results – Particle Systems has opted to produce a software-only game, shunning graphics accelerators altogether. The results speak for themselves: *I-War* is remarkably attractive, with beautifully texture-mapped ships, fantastic light sourcing, and a playing area made aesthetically pleasing by the brilliant colours of the vectors and impressive explosions.

In fact, the only drawback to the game is the lack of any multiplayer option. Conspicuous by its absence, any hope players may have had of taking on a friend over the Internet, or even a LAN, is quashed. In some ways it's refreshing that Particle has backed the plight of the single gamer in these days of multiplayer activity, although it also hints at naivety, and it will be interesting to note how many potential buyers will be put off by this limitation – a limitation that detrimentally affects the game's replay value.

Particle Systems should be forgiven this oversight, though, as *I-War* is undoubtedly a game of quality. As space combat goes, it immediately scrambles up there with the very best, managing to take on the two most well-established series of games in PC history and still look impressive. In terms of UK-developed PC space combat sims, *I-War* sets a new benchmark, and that in itself is no mean feat.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten



Circling space stations (above) can be a mesmerising experience thanks to the game's hugely rich visuals



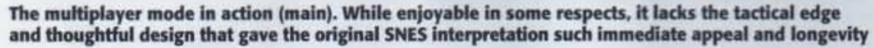


The game's training missions guide players through the ship's most important features, step by step

EDGE			
	Format: **PC**	Publisher: **Ocean**	
	Developer: **Particle Systems**	Price: **£40**	Release: **Out now**

Baku **Bomberman**




The multiplayer mode in action (main). While enjoyable in some respects, it lacks the tactical edge and thoughtful design that gave the original SNES interpretation such immediate appeal and longevity







Simple design hides some deceptively pleasurable effects; the explosions are particularly good

And so the 64bit refurbishment of premium SNES titles continues. While the majority of this new breed have taken the logical step of realising their 2D aims in a successfully implemented 3D environment, an altogether more suspect evolutionary offshoot has appeared, raising doubts as to whether every old Nintendo game is suitable for the 3D makeover.

The *Mario* series and the original *PilotWings* were two 16bit titles that seemed to be waiting for the right hardware to become available before their full potential could be realised; the critical and commercial success of their N64 siblings bears testament to this. Unfortunately, *Baku Bomberman* (like *Tetrisphere* before it) belongs to a strain of games that sit uneasily with their gleaming new cutting-edge hardware status.

The main strength of the original SNES version of *Bomberman* lay in the superlative simplicity of its multiplayer mode – the oneplayer game generally being disregarded in favour of it – and, with four players, it offered an inordinate amount of fun. The premise was simple: players must kill other competitors before they are taken down themselves. A simple maze and a few well-placed bombs were all it took to ensure *Bomberman*'s place in gaming history. And, while the prospect of experiencing an N64 version is exciting, the necessary complications involved in transforming a 2D game into a 3D environment have drained rather than enriched the charm of *Bomberman's* originally uncluttered vision.

Visually, *Baku Bomberman* is effective, boasting a simple isometric-style view and a neat and unfussy *Super Mario* approach. However, it's the viewpoint which proves to be the game's primary undoing. The overhead camera – although implemented satisfactorily via manual control through the C-buttons – is set simply too far away, rendering the main protagonist and other characters far too small. The absence of a camera zoom makes playing immensely frustrating in built-up areas. Negotiating a narrow alleyway sandwiched between two buildings, for example, is as much a matter of guesswork as skill.

The levels in the oneplayer game are disappointingly



The levels are simply too small to ensure a rewarding gaming experience





The decision to transfer *Bomberman* into a 3D world is an exciting concept let down by an unsatisfying execution

The game's intro sets the scene for the lead protagonist, explaining the slim plot via some admittedly great cut scenes. The villain's fortress (above) must be infiltrated to save the day

small. The plot (such as it is) has Bomberman's world invaded by marauding nasties. Thus Bomberman has to infiltrate their base – a flying fortress reached via four connected 'worlds' (two of which are Nintendo gaming staples – 'ice' and 'lava'). Each of these four contain three levels, one of which represents a boss encounter and all of which are decidedly compact. And, although players are free to roam wherever they can reach, the route through each is rigidly linear, smacking of concession to 'true' 3D and betraying the link to *Mario 64*, the game it so obviously takes its inspiration from. Also, annoyingly, when revisiting an already 'cleared' area, more often than not the slain bad guys will have been resurrected. That they weren't numerous enough in the first place seems to be simply laziness on the part of the programmers.

It is precisely these faults, however, that highlight *Baku Bomberman*'s trump card – a deceptively simple but subtle control system that sits paradoxically with its complex 3D surroundings. There is no jumping or climbing here: everything revolves (perhaps unsurprisingly) around the use of bombs. The A button drops a bomb, a second tap kicks it to the intended target, while B enables it to be picked up and thrown. To this is added a range of power-ups that, variously, allow more bombs to be laid, increase the blast area, and allow remote detonation (via the Z-trigger). Using a combination of all three, impressive chain reactions can be created, resulting in some splendid explosions, which are vital to overcome some of the more exacting puzzles.

It's a system that works remarkably well, but only serves to highlight the disappointing lack of enjoyment to be had within the game's levels. This feeling is carried over to the all-new multiplayer mode. For hardcore fans, this was always going to be the part of the game that determined whether *Baku Bomberman* lived or died, and **Edge** cannot exactly refer to the prognosis as optimistic. Although there is a good selection of arenas in which to fight (five in all), the camera is, again, placed far too far away from the action. As a result characters are mere specks and are easily lost in the melée. Add to this a distinct lack of cover (and thus a disappointing lack of tactical opportunities) and the game soon descends into a mad and random hurling of bombs. The multiplayer game's one redeeming feature – that dead players can return as ghosts to annoy the remaining Bombermen – fails to lift this tragically misjudged segment out of the bucket marked 'Terrible Waste'.

Baku Bomberman fails to realise the potential of its conversion to 3D (if indeed it was ever possible) and the feeling abounds throughout the game that the title is somehow only half-finished. Those looking for a rewarding depth of gameplay will encounter moments of joy but will, ultimately, be sorely disappointed. A missed opportunity, without question.

Edge rating:

Five out of ten

Format: **Nintendo 64**	Publisher: **HudsonSoft**	
Developer: **In-house**	Price: **¥7,800 (£35)**	Release: **Out now (Japan)**

Overboard!







Overboard!'s character designs represent a curious – but certainly very appealing – blend of Japanese and European influences (main)

Other than the seminal *Monkey Island* series, the treasure trove of storylines offered by pirate legends has been under-utilised. With the release of *Overboard!*, Psygnosis has set out to exploit this deficiency, putting the player in direct control of a pirate galleon with which to conquer the 'period' worlds of the Caribbean, Incas, Arctic, and the Middle East.

After a few moments play, it becomes clear that *Overboard!* is not to be taken too seriously. The game intends to create a fun environment, from the cartoon-style FMV intro to the cutesy options screen and the arcade-style third-person viewpoint in the game proper. To a large extent it succeeds in this; the player's ship careers around the not-so-high seas like a demented speed boat, plying a maze of waterways that prove strangely reminiscent of the Spectrum classic *Sabre Wulf*.

The basic task is to collect a series of bottles containing segments of a map which, when complete, reveals the exit. Along the way players are given the opportunity to collect floating treasure chests (in order to obtain a 'perfect'), plus new and varied upgrades to their arsenals. Progress is impeded by an assortment of obvious and not-so-obvious foes, including rival battleships, flame-throwing turrets and exploding fish. At times *Overboard!* feels distinctly like a platform game, with obstacles such as the rotating saw blades clearly lifted from the *Super Mario* series. There's also an enjoyable multiplayer battle mode which adds an intriguing facet to the game.

Such a dry list of features may appear to offer little that is new, but it's attention to detail that fires the winning salvo for *Overboard!*. Other than the exploding fish and their bomb-dropping parrot counterparts, special modifiers can be found at key points, providing the player with distinctly non-piratical enhancements such as attaching a hot air balloon to the boat. However, these add-ons are only supplied to aid gameplay, not just as graphical fripperies.

Where *Overboard!* fails, unfortunately, is in the repetitive nature of its level designs, with little variation between successive stages other than an increase in difficulty level.

Setting aside any misgivings regarding its level design, *Overboard!* deserves praise for its appeal to an unforgivably under-utilised cache of plot elements. As such, it is in line for at least one encore.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten



Some of the game's obstacles appear to have been inspired by elements from the *Super Mario* series





Hectic multiplayer action takes place on a single screen, with the camera zooming and panning to accommodate up to four players

Format: **PlayStation**	Publisher: **Psygnosis**	
Developer: **Wheelhaus**	Price: **£45**	Release: **Out now**

Colony Wars







Graphical effects are among the best seen on the PlayStation, with the action taking place in smooth hi-res. Certain sections draw heavily on classic movie setpieces, with enemy craft screaming out of the sun into combat. The influence of the 'Star Wars' trilogy is unmistakable

Despite widespread acknowledgement that beautifully rendered FMV sequences and hi-res graphics are no substitute for gameplay, many developers seem to still have a place in their hearts for interactive movies. Built around a sub-'Star Wars' plot in which, unsurprisingly, the player is part of an underdog rebellion force fighting an evil empire, *Colony Wars* sets out its stall early on with lavish streamed video and great audio production (complete with a James Earl Jones voiceover). Reflecting the industry's desire to reproduce Hollywood's creations, sweeping strings and threatening rumbles abound, but – as in the rest of the game – there's an unavoidable underlying sense of cliché.

Before each mission begins, the player is forced to listen to a complex briefing that regularly boils down to the same directive: shoot everything. It is this simplicity that proves to be *Colony Wars'* undoing. Looking beyond is superlative visuals, the game proves little more than a 3D interpretation of *Asteroids*. Trudging through several missions in search of a more cerebral challenge, only one section really stands out, wherein the player is required to disable an enemy craft before towing it back to a friendly mothership. Sadly, subsequent levels return to the formulaic blasting that really defines *Colony Wars*.

Unusually, failure to complete a mission doesn't result in losing a life, or even giving the player the chance to attempt the mission again. Instead the storyline switches paths, becoming less or more favourable until defeat or victory is at hand. At first this seems to be a welcome variation from usual game structure, but frustration soon sets in as several missions have to be worked through in order to reach the one which was failed. Additionally, there is no clear indication of a change in storyline, giving the player little incentive to retry the stage.

For a title built upon convention, it is perhaps fitting that *Colony Wars'* beauty is only skin deep. **Edge** can't help wondering if Psygnosis has overcome its obsession with graphics and presentation values at the expense of gameplay – something that can be traced back to its earliest efforts in the '80s.



Diving in for the kill proves remarkably satisfying the first time it occurs. Unfortunately, subsequent attacks fail to maintain a significant level of interest

Edge rating:

Six out of ten





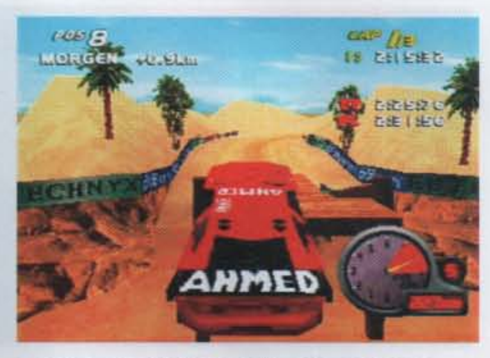
In space, no one can hear you yawn. However, if they could, *Colony Wars* would present it in glorious Dolby Surround Sound

Format: **PlayStation/PC**	Publisher: **Psygnosis**	
Developer: **In-house**	Price: **£45**	Release: **Out now**

Total Drivin'



Background scenery is often interesting and compelling, ranging from Scottish castles (above) to underpasses snaking beneath Hong Kong (left)



Easy-to-cross bridges can turn into precarious ramps during the later sections of certain stages

Total Drivin' could easily have been another average title in the PlayStation's burgeoning bag of racing games. Having six car types under one roof – including erratic 4x4 buggies, sturdier Dakar Rally cars, and zippy-but-dangerous Indy cars – might spread the game engine's abilities too thinly. Here, however, Eutechnyx must have spent many hours painstakingly coaching the manners of each vehicle, because they are all very different and hugely compelling to drive.

And there's an impressive realism to the whole thing. Independent suspension and finely honed racing physics makes each corner a fresh challenge to the player; the cars' reactions dependent on the speed and angle of entry and the condition of the road surface. Yet despite the realism, *Total Drivin'* manages to retain an immediacy and intuitiveness which is missing from, say, *V-Rally* – perhaps due to the employment of the two top shoulder buttons as turning aids (à la *Wipeout*), enabling players to avoid many an off-track excursion.

The circuits themselves are also highly impressive. There are six locations, each with six levels of difficulty; all feature smooth textures, masses of collateral scenic detail, and at least one short cut. They are also impressively long, so it seems no compromises have been made to allow the huge range of racing possibilities.

The minor deficiencies – visuals haven't quite the sheen of a Namco racer and there are some idiosyncratic irritations (plunge off a cliff in oneplayer mode and it's game over) – are countered by the fact that Eutechnyx seems to be well aware of one crucial fact: it is pointless to produce a driving game if it isn't going to stand among the best. Combining the realism of a sim with the instinctive rush of a coin-op is no mean feat, but this title has succeeded. If *V-Rally* and *Rage Racer* are considered classics of the genre, this should too.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten





The key strength of *Total Drivin'* is its variety. Six different types of vehicles, including buggies (left) and rally cars (right), compete over six very different locations. Naturally, this is at the expense of sim authenticity



The twoplayer mode is great fun, with little graphical compromise

Format: **PlayStation**	Publisher: **Ocean**	
Developer: **Eutechnyx**	Price: **£40**	Release: **December**

Fighting Force







Even though the game's locations vary substantially from one stage to the next, the same cannot be said of the gameplay, which sadly does little to maintain the player's interest

Scrolling beat 'em ups once ruled the arcades, with titles such as *Double Dragon* and *Final Fight* guzzling up countless coins around the globe. The arrival of 16bit technology allowed programmers to reproduce faithful conversions for home systems, and these were received with no less enthusiasm. Indeed, as one of the first SNES releases, *Final Fight* caused quite a stir when it first appeared on Nintendo's 16bit console. Sega responded with *Streets of Rage*, which, despite not having a coin-op parentage, certainly wasn't afraid to show its influences.

The genre more or less died with the gradual disappearance of the 16bit market, but is set to make a resurgence with Core Design's *Fighting Force*.

The first noticeable feature is the fact that a gap of several years hasn't helped designers to come up with a stronger, more plausible plot for a scrolling beat 'em up. This time, Dr Zeng, a brilliant – yet, obligatorily, mad – scientist convinces himself the year 2000 will bring about Armageddon. When the fateful day finally arrives and nothing happens, Zeng and his cult members make it their responsibility to end the world themselves.

This, of course, is where players come in: after choosing one of the four Fighting Force members, they set off to battle Zeng's deranged followers through 25 action-packed stages.

As well as possessing a variety of moves, each character can also perform a special attack, particularly useful when surrounded by enemies. More satisfying, though, is the ability to pick up just about any object and use it as a weapon. Destroy a car, for example, and its wheels can be thrown at opponents. Similarly, metal bars from barriers can be yanked away from their original position and put to better use against Zeng's crazy army.

For about five stages this is all great fun, but *Fighting Force*'s major drawback soon becomes apparent. There is no lack of action, yet – apart from an unexciting boss level every so often – there is little change in gameplay. Players simply fight group after group of enemies until they move on to the next stage and repeat the exercise against new backdrops. Plug in a second joypad and the experience is more enjoyable (as the usual banter is exchanged), but it ultimately suffers from predictable monotony.

In its efforts to reinterpret the scrolling beat 'em up, Core has overlooked the need to update the genre's gameplay. As a result, *Fighting Force* is a game based on something that will, to most players, be better left as a fond memory of times gone by.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten



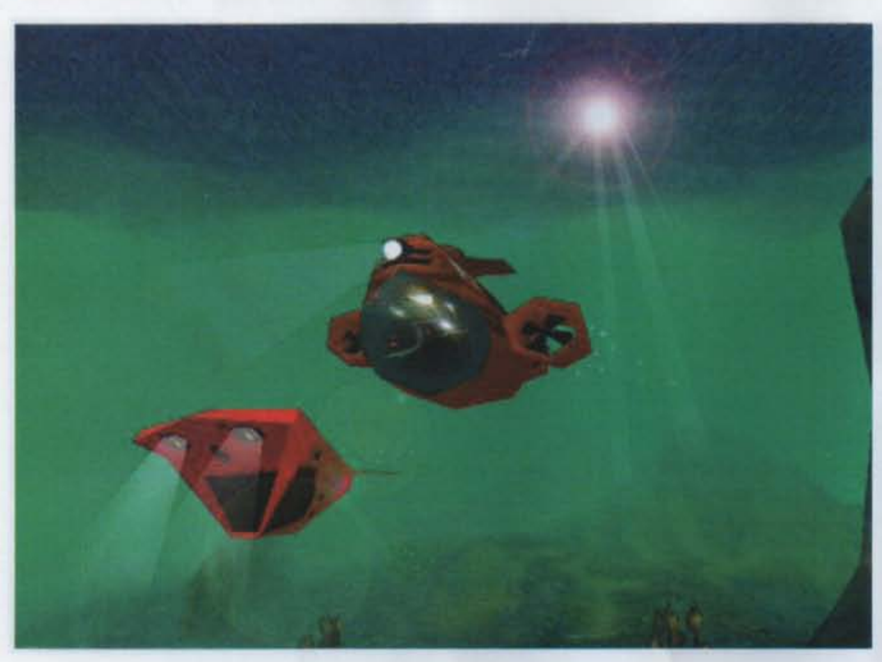




One of *Fighting Force*'s strengths is the level of interactivity offered between the characters and the backgrounds. Just about any object can be destroyed, revealing weapons or energy icons

Format: **PlayStation**	Publisher: **Eidos**	
Developer: **Core**	Price: **£45**	Release: **Out now (UK)**

Sub Culture







Lighting effects are stunning – even the sun penetrating the ocean's surface is simulated (above). Despite its cute storyline, *Sub Culture* is as concerned with battles as it is with strange fish (right), and its play on inter-cultural conflict is reminiscent of the 8bit 3D classic *Mercenary*

The advent of accelerator cards and raised programming standards has challenged developers of 3D PC titles to showcase more innovative game environments and effects to mark new titles out for special attention. *Sub Culture* does just that, deploying an array of lighting effects and sympathetically palletised textures to bring an underwater world to life.

The title refers to a race of tiny sea-dwellers who eke out a living scavenging the ocean floor for discarded human debris. In the role of one such creature players must undertake a variety of missions, trading goods to raise money for upgrades to their submarine, and dealing with pirates and warring factions that are to be expected in a world so closely modelled upon our own.





Criterion has upgraded its Renderware 3D engine to accurately realise the undersea world; close clipping suits the environment and keeps the game speedy even on low-end Pentiums

It's a curious scenario, one which suggests a rather twee treatment, yet in play *Sub Culture* is business as usual, working like a seabound *Elite* in a broadly similar way to Blue Byte's *Archimedean Dynasty*. Starting with a simple mission to collect raw crystals, selling them to a nearby refinery, then buying back the processed stuff to sell on again for a profit, the game diversifies into battles against mutant eels, stealthy chases and daring rescues as the trading element continues in the background.

It's a simple but largely successful formula, the rather mellow pace suiting the underwater setting perfectly, and the handling of the main submarine proving particularly satisfying. The main attraction is of course the underwater environment, populated by some weird and wonderful organisms – the sort of creatures normally reserved for a TV documentary. The simulation of day and night cycles, with lens flaring, shafts of sunlight, and even a dappled effect playing on the ocean floor serve to conjure up a convincing atmosphere. There is an alarming lack of depth to the 3D view, but that works within the context of the murky underwater setting. Even without a 3D accelerator the results are pleasing, although the 8bit colour palette restricts those lighting effects somewhat.

While *Sub Culture* is a game of genuine beauty, that relaxed pace inevitably makes it a less than thrilling experience. Even in the most extreme situations, the gameplay is always more mildly engaging than compulsive. It's amiable, then, if not essential.

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten

Format: **PC**	Publisher: **Ubi Soft**	
Developer: **Criterion**	Price: **£40**	Release: **Out now**

F22 Advanced Dominance Fighter









F22 Advanced Dominance Fighter **offers a hugely complex and expertly realised game environment. The cockpit view (left) is perfunctory, but the array of externals really demonstrate what DID has achieved in visual terms**

Some 300 man years in the making, DID's latest opus has a frightening and overwhelming level of complexity. Son of flight sim extraordinaire *EF2000*, *F22 Advanced Dominance Fighter* has apparently been in development since 1992 borrowing more than a few elements from granddaddy *TFX*.

While flight sims may never appeal to as wide an audience as, say, driving games, millions of gamers around the world have nevertheless been chewing the fingertips from their flight gloves in anticipation of *F22 ADF*. And while DID may have bitten off a little more than it can chew in trying to create the perfect simulator, it's not far off.

Graphically *F22 ADF* is simply gobsmacking. Imagine these shots in animated form, at 30 fps at 800x600 resolution. Imagine smoke trails and huge explosions, realistic clouds and fogging, a translucent cockpit, lens flare, realtime lighting and shadows, anti-aliasing, high-resolution textures and a continuously rolling terrain covering over a million square miles of land around the Red Sea and the Nile. And imagine the kind of monster PC needed to throw at it. Give it a 3Dfx card to boot and the eye candy that ensues is among the tastiest ever realised.

Anal flight sim enthusiasts are correct in insisting that most important factor is how the craft flies, though. The F22 won't be produced until the next millennium, so it's anyone's guess as to whether the game's interpretation behaves accurately, but there's certainly a significant amount of perverse pleasure to be gleaned from soaring through the clouds, popping on time compression and screaming around coastlines, through valleys and down the Nile from Luxor to the Aswan Dam.

DID has incorporated six degrees of freedom, meaning that the craft can point in a different direction to that which it is travelling in, allowing players to slide into turns or target bomb sites while flying level.

F22 ADF seriously misses the mission builder that was initially promised (which should follow as a free upgrade in the next few months), but is replete with single missions and campaigns. In add-on terms, there is the AWACS, though, which allows players to assume the role of a commander, watching a radar picture of the entire area, and ordering interceptions and patrols by dragging and dropping fighters. If an F22 is enjoying a good scrap somewhere, players can double click on it and immediately jump into the pilot's seat.

Certainly the best home flight simulator ever created, *F22 ADF* will undoubtedly become an even more desirable prospect once the upgrade arrives.

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten



The AWACS option allows players to take on the role of commander, issuing strategies from a safe seat





Ground detail is impressive (as was to be expected), and is accompanied by some subtle sky hue tones

Format: **PC**	Publisher: **Ocean**	
Developer: **DID**	Price: **£45**	Release: **Out now**

Joint Strike Fighter







***Joint Strike Fighter*'s 3D engine is a remarkable piece of work, running at a respectable frame rate even on an unaccelerated PC – regrettably, too much of this effort is wasted on empty skies**

Flight sims have always been a staple component of PC gaming. No other platform has the resources to offer gamers the same amount of depth, realism or wealth of options the PC can. However, flight sim developers often struggle to marry the dynamics of a simulation with the rewarding mechanics of a decent game. *Joint Strike Fighter* epitomises this syndrome perfectly, a slightly unhappy combination of revolutionary technology with an oddly empty gameplay experience that, in comparison to DID's supremely crafted *F22 ADF* (see opposite) seems woefully undernourished in development terms.

Two planes are available in the game: the Lockheed Martin X-35B and the Boeing X-32B (craft that, in real life, are bitter rivals, vying for the lucrative contract to become the next US Air Force super plane). Both are beautifully and accurately recreated here. Unfortunately they are deep-strike aircraft, utilising stealth technology to progress largely unnoticed into the heart of the target zone – as a result, *Joint Strike Fighter* is a lonely experience. Far too much time is spent navigating barren skies, occasionally loosing off a laser-guided missile at a target that isn't even within visual range.

With four sprawling scenarios (Afghanistan, Colombia, Korea and the Kola Peninsula), *Joint Strike Fighter* has the potential to offer a challenge that is as engrossing as it is accurately rendered. Perversely, though, the developer's own attempts to involve the player in the mission structure works against it; rather than being spoon-fed missions, players are invited to pick targets from the map and assign a set of waypoints between them. Rather than adding to the sense of immersion in some larger campaign, this feature merely serves to make the missions seem arbitrary and inconsequential.

Joint Strike Fighter suffers from the all-too-familiar situation of an astonishing graphics engine underpinning a flawed game. In fact, it's the sophistication of the engine itself that ultimately exposes the emptiness of the game world and its unrewarding structure. Perhaps Innerloop should have spent less time on its maths and more on how it was going to compete in such an established PC arena. A lesson learned, then/.

Edge rating:

Six out of ten





Innerloop's software technology allows for some truly fantastic scenes

Format: **PC**	Publisher: **Eidos**	
Developer: **Innerloop**	Price: **£40**	Release: **Out now**

Enemy Zero



A still from the superb elevator scene, in which an alien smashes its way through the roof and attacks Laura. *E0*'s cut scenes range from the sublime to, later in the game, the frankly tedious





To use a football cliché out of context, Sega's new adventure, developed by entrepreneurial Japanese codeshop Warp, is a game of two halves. Comprising prerendered rooms with corridor sections generated in real time, it's a fusion of styles made curious by one significant difference: its use of sound.

Based on a spaceship comprising a crew of seven (including female lead Laura), *Enemy Zero* plays homage to sci-fi plot mainstays; it 'borrows' story elements from 'Alien' to 'Blade Runner' and back again. Indeed, at times it borders on plagiarism, and Warp's admiration of Ridley Scott's two seminal motion-picture classics becomes all too apparent.

Enemy Zero boasts two introductory sequences that are high on prerendered style but low on information – something which appears intentional. Players begin their first game with little knowledge of the environment in which they find themselves, other than the apparent death of crew member Parker at the hands, tentacles or claws of an unknown entity. That *Enemy Zero* succeeds in creating a suspense-ridden atmosphere from its beginning is admirable; that it sustains it for at least the next half an hour is worthy of respect.

First encounters with the invisible aliens are tense, with players able to judge their potential assailants' positions by sound alone. Exact positions of enemies can be gauged through the repeat rate and pitch of tones emitted by Laura's motion tracker – however, finding a weapon doesn't see *Enemy Zero* become a mere corridor-based shoot 'em up. Each gun offers a limited amount of shots – from as little as one per charge – and alien foes can only be dispatched from close range.

Rendered cut-scenes are interwoven seamlessly with realtime gameplay, one in particular being worthy of note: Laura finds herself travelling to another floor in a lift; as she relaxes, a bulge appears in the ceiling with an enormous bang. Suddenly an alien crashes its way through the ceiling and lands with a not-inconsiderable bump, knocking the heroine's gun from her hand. She turns to flee and a free-moving corridor section kicks in, with Laura attempting to escape into ventilation shafts.

Unfortunately, it's at this point that Warp's ambitious space horror breaks down to become mere space soap. As Laura encounters the surviving crew members, the dialogue becomes truly awful – of a quality at least on a par with early FMV adventures – with feeble lines dripping with forced emotion.

There's a 'love' story, a shocking discovery and, in the process, the atmosphere and suspense that *Enemy Zero* created so successfully in the first of the game's three discs, is destroyed. The plot becomes throwaway at this point, even bordering on embarrassing.

Enemy Zero is notable for its use of sound. Warp is unique in its championing of the oft-neglected aural aspect of videogames, and *Enemy Zero*'s music (composed by Michael Nyman, no less) and spot effects blend seamlessly.

But an 'interactive movie' – *Enemy Zero* at its base, prerendered level – requires a plot that entertains. Lacking that, Warp's space opera (after a highly promising opening CD) offers little more than a reworking of an over-plagiarised story, with realtime sections that come nowhere near reaching the excitement factor generated by recent Saturn first-person titles such as *Duke Nukem*, for example.

To top it all, there is even an alien queen. Kenji Eno's Warp team should be aiming higher than this.



Edge rating:

Six out of ten



While aliens may not be apparent, they *are* there







***E0*'s corridors (top) – generated in realtime – are a far cry from its stunning prerendered sequences**

Format: **Saturn**	Publisher: **Sega**	
Developer: **Warp**	Price: **£40**	Release: **December**

Jedi Knight







Moodily lit, well-staged set-pieces capture the essence of the movies (above) and make *Jedi Knight* a joy to play despite its weaknesses, with a wealth of familiar objects and creatures waiting to be discovered (top right). Success depends on exploring all possible avenues (right)

The 'Star Wars' saga provides the richest pickings for computer interpretations, yet LucasArts has only periodically succeeded in capturing the flavour of George Lucas' creation without compromising gameplay. *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces* finally marries the two, using a powerful 3D engine and accelerator support to bring a host of familiar imagery to life.

In fact it's the game design rather than the technology that makes this such a success, for lurking behind the many impressive scenes are rough edges that wouldn't be tolerated in a release from other developers. Viewing the animation of main character Kyle Katern using the third-person viewpoint recalls the substandard efforts of *Shadows of the Empire*, while the exterior scenes look strangely amateurish, lacking enough polygons or unique textures to even begin to convince.

Yet *Jedi Knight* remains a wholly convincing experience in game terms, pushing the player smoothly and inexorably into ever-more dangerous levels. And countless incidental details, such as the way dead bodies or hacked limbs slide down ledges or float with the flow of water, prove that the designers have a strong appreciation for the cinematic nature of the genre.

And rarely has the 'one more go' urge been tapped so effectively. Many levels feature seemingly insurmountable puzzles, yet just when the player is ready to give up, a simple solution presents itself. Progress is rewarded with more impressive designs and set pieces, proving the enormity of the levels doesn't come at the expense of tight pacing or an appreciation for the splendour of the source material. That the music and sound effects are lifted directly from the movies only serves to emphasise this authenticity.

It may suffer in comparison to *Quake* (or *Quake II* for that matter) because of that lack of polish, yet playing *Jedi Knight* is never anything less than thrilling. Yes, it may be a flawed diamond, but a few dumb moments never did the 'Star Wars' trilogy any harm.

Edge rating:

Eight out of ten





Outdoor scenes often look flat, uninspired and unconvincing



The first-person viewpoint allows for greater shot accuracy but doesn't offer a good field of view

Format: **PC**	Publisher: **Virgin**	
Developer: **LucasArts**	Price: **£40**	Release: **Out now**

Riven







Cyan pioneered the use of *Softimage* three years ago, when it was barely known. Now the challenge is to produce an immersive world to compete with the likes of *Tomb Raider* et al





***Riven*'s prerendered backdrops are certainly without question. Its gameplay is slightly less convincing**

By breaking out of the hardcore gaming market and selling over three million copies, *Riven*'s predecessor *Myst* achieved the dreams of every software publisher. Yet within the PC gaming community, opinions on *Myst* range from begrudged respect to outright hostility. Playing *Riven*, it's hard to see it faring any better in hardcore gamers' eyes.

Riven features a far larger world, and a more detailed one, too. Cyan has bolstered its already impressive rendering skills and the result in a world of shocking clarity and realism. Not only are individual locations carefully realised, *Riven* has an aesthetic completeness quite unlike any game **Edge** has previously encountered.

It's more than beauty for its own sake. Panoramic vistas are interspersed with locations the player will visit in the future, and even the sounds often reveal vital clues about the nature of a particular device. Indeed, almost anything it's possible to see or hear has some purpose – not in the sense of it being a telegraphed clue, but as a vital part of one comprehensive work of imagination.

Still, in gameplay terms, *Riven* is about solving puzzles. Where it differs from similar adventures is in how these puzzles are embedded into the world. This is partly a consequence of *Riven*'s islands being so spartan, and partly a conscious effort on the developers' part.

This feeling of immersion is remarkable considering how static *Riven* is. The addition of rippling water and the occasional creatures are welcome, but they can't relieve the endemic stillness so familiar from *Myst*. Actors make an appearance courtesy of FMV but, initially, they're few and far between. Despite constant hints of *Riven*'s native population, players are largely isolated. This might have been the sensation Cyan wished to evoke, but it's one compounded by the point-and-click gameplay. Careful path design partly mitigates the feeling of claustrophobia, but sometimes the urge just to scale the nearest hill to see what's on the other side is overwhelming.

Cyan considered employing a first- or third-person engine for *Riven*, but was deterred by the loss in graphic quality. While **Edge** understands the proven capabilities of Cyan's chosen medium, it's difficult to imagine dedicated gamers feeling at ease with *Riven*. Since *Myst*, there's been a steady shift towards realtime 3D, typified by the likes of *Quake*, *Tomb Raider* and *Mario 64*, all of whom have made up for a lack of photo-realism with a hundred-fold increase in freedom. *Riven* barely counters with prerendered graphics and a satisfying story.

Such advancements in immersive, interactive gaming environments are still seeping into the consciousness of the wider gaming public. Thus with careful marketing and promotion, *Riven* will probably find an audience more amenable to its prerendered appeal. The question is whether Cyan can incorporate its almost Tolkien-esque world-building skills into a more cutting-edge game vehicle next time. It's one thing to take games to the mass market, but quite another to bring something from the mass market back to gaming. **E**

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten

Format: **PC**	Publisher: **Red Orb**	
Developer: **Cyan**	Price: **£40**	Release: **Out now**

Resident Evil

Director's Cut

Cynics will no doubt view *Resident Evil Director's Cut* as either an attempt to keep players occupied until the sequel finally arrives, or a shameless cashing-in exercise. There may, of course, be some truth in both statements; regardless, this title offers new players a lot of game for their money.

As well as a fantastic, substantial playable demo of *Resident Evil 2*, the package offers three versions of the game: the standard US and European interpretation; the easier Japanese version; and an advanced mode which will be the most interesting offering to players familiar with the original.

The plot remains the same, but in addition to a collection of new camera angles, Capcom has placed most of the items in different locations, as well as changing the enemy arrangement, the result being that even *Resident Evil* veterans will get the odd surprise or two. The difficulty level has been increased, too, so that even as Jill, players should find it a worthy challenge.

Although early reports claimed this version would also include the uncensored intro and cinematic sequences found on the original Japanese release, an alleged miscommunication between Capcom's international offices has resulted in the US version retaining the censored scenes. At the time of writing, there is no confirmation whether the UK version will suffer a similar fate.

While it may only attract die-hard *Resident Evil* fanatics, any player who, for some inexplicable reason, hasn't experienced the original, is now faced with a truly essential purchase.

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten







Although the gameplay remains the same, Capcom has rerendered some rooms to allow for different angles or textures and moved enemies around

EDGE	Format: **PlayStation**	Publisher: **Capcom**
	Developer: **In-house**	Price: **$40 (£25)**
	Release: **Out now (US/Jap)**	

Konami's first 3D fighter benefits from the near-Model 3 power of its new Cobra board

Fighting Wu-Shu







While not matching the motion-catured standards of *VF3*, *Fighting Wu-Shu* features some seriously detailed visuals







A seaside setting (top) may be nothing new, but few could argue with its execution

At the recent JAMMA Amusement Machine Show (See **E**51), Konami demonstrated the abilities of its Cobra chipset, not with the much-vaunted driving game, *Racing Jam*, but the lesser-known beat 'em up, Fighting Wushu. JAMMA attendees were disappointed by the actual performance of this first incarnation of Cobra, originally pitched as a direct competitor to Sega's Model 3 board. However, the game itself featured some interesting touches.

For its first fighting game to be realised in a 3D environment, Konami has drawn together a number of traditional martial arts disciplines in what is rather dodgily referred to as 'Martial Art Olympic Comedy'.

Compared to its peers, *Fighting Wushu* features a relatively meagre number of protagonists, presenting only eight to choose from. It could be argued that rather than attempting to compete with the ever-increasing numbers of contestants found in the games of Capcom, Sega and Namco Konami has made a wise decision in specifically looking to gameplay for recognition.

Putting aside the game's conventional (but detailed) backgrounds, the most interesting aspect of *Fighting Wushu* is its AI. CPU opponents are programmed to learn the tactics of successful human combatants and react against them. Hopefully the outcome of this will be the encouragement of varied gameplay rather than an undefeatable game.

In another inventive feature, victorious players have their play technique saved at the





Beat 'em up fanatics may balk at *Wu-Shu*'s meagre line-up of eight characters



Pitting combatants from different martial arts disciplines against one another, *Fighting Wushu* is very Japanese in flavour





As is to be expected, the usual throwing, punching and high-kicking moves abound







While clean and crisp, the game's graphics are also strangely drab



same time as their initials; other human players then find themselves in combat with this saved data at selected points in the game. Less promising is the 'automatic' mode, wherein beginner/inept arcade visitors can play a version of *Wushu* which only requires the use of one button. Some of the game's more spectacular moves can then be accessed merely through repeatedly battering any key, something which may horrify traditionalists.

In line with some of its contemporaries, *Fighting Wushu* also has a power gauge that gradually increases as battle rages. At its maximum position this energy can be unleashed in a demonstration of the selected fighter's 'mythical techniques'.

Control via the stick allows for movement in all planes, while the action buttons are assigned to the *Virtua Fighter* standards of kick, punch and guard. The lack of a direct jump control could prove off-putting to many, with a quick down-up movement required to achieve lift off.

While not offering the depth of gameplay (or graphical finesse) evident in *VF3*, *Fighting Wushu*'s novel approach to AI could well be enough to engender a series of games that build upon its themes.

Developer:	Konami
Release:	TBA
Origin:	Japan

Rival Schools: United by Fate



More than two characters can appear on-screen at the same time because of the team battle element, echoing previous beat 'em ups from Capcom





Against an onslaught of 3D fighting games, Capcom's arcade titles have stood their two-dimensional ground for quite some time. Only *Star Gladiator* and *Street Fighter EX* and its recent updates have made the push into the Z-plane. Now, however, a new offensive has begun with the arrival of *Rival Schools: United by Fate*.

Utilising a system board similar to that of *Street Fighter EX*, *Rival Schools* draws on the teenage aspect of manga. Players choose a team of high-school combatants, with five teams of three characters available to select. Battle takes place over five to eight scenarios, with some stages featuring multi-storey action.

Rival Schools has been built around the proven combat system of *X-Men vs Street Fighter*, with players able to call in extra characters when performing certain high-powered attacks.

Judging by the queues to play the machines at JAMMA (where there was some speculation that Capcom was using the same board as that of *Star Gladiators*, which, if true, would ensure a prompt PlayStation conversion), the gameplay went down well with the generally discerning crowd of Japanese onlookers.

With its solid and fresh character designs, *Rival Schools* could be the start of something big for Capcom in the world of 3D, building upon the solid foundations of the *Street Fighter EX* series.

As far as distinctive game titles go, the one afforded this takes some beating (and will doubtlessly be changed when the game hits western shores); fans of the Capcom will be hoping that game content will be similarly attention-grabbing. E





Capcom has included some classic gameplay traits from *X-Men* in its latest fighting venture



Developer	Capcom
Release	TBA
Origin	Japan





Colourful imagery presented via some great camera angles distinguish the game

Rapid River







Eschewing the serious side of gaming, *Rapid River* places players in control of a wild water inflatable, complete with a full-size paddle



While other coin-op manufacturers chase their tails producing as many driving and fighting games, Namco has decided, thankfully, to try something different. As mentioned in **E**51, *Rapid River* is best described as the spiritual successor to Atari's classic *Toobin'*, in which players guided a rubber ring through hazard-strewn waterways.

Rapid River's most remarkable feature is its control system, as gamers are required to thrash their way downstream with a full-size canoe paddle mounted on the cabinet.

Two different stages – 'Original' and 'Extraordinary' – can be tackled, offering bizarre levels such as Volcano Land, Glacier Land and Dinosaur Land. As with some of Namco's other recent releases, *Final Furlong* (**E**51) and *Armadillo Racing* (**E**49), *Rapid River* reveals a return to what arcade games should really be: frantic and fun.



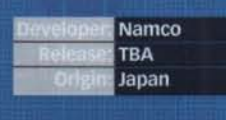
Motorcross Go!







Motocross Go! is all about exaggeration – Namco has used a physics model which sees bikers jumping much higher than would be possible in real life



Running on its System 23 board (a system whose power is only slightly beefed up from System 22), Namco's *Motocross Go!* is an off-road motorbike racing game developed by the team responsible for *Cyber Cycles* and *Suzuka 8 Hours*.

Motocross Go! is very much designed as a accessible coin-op rather than a tricky-to-control racer with simulation qualities.

Players will be able to perform increasingly outrageous jumps as they progress through the tracks, with the always-popular option to link cabinets together available.

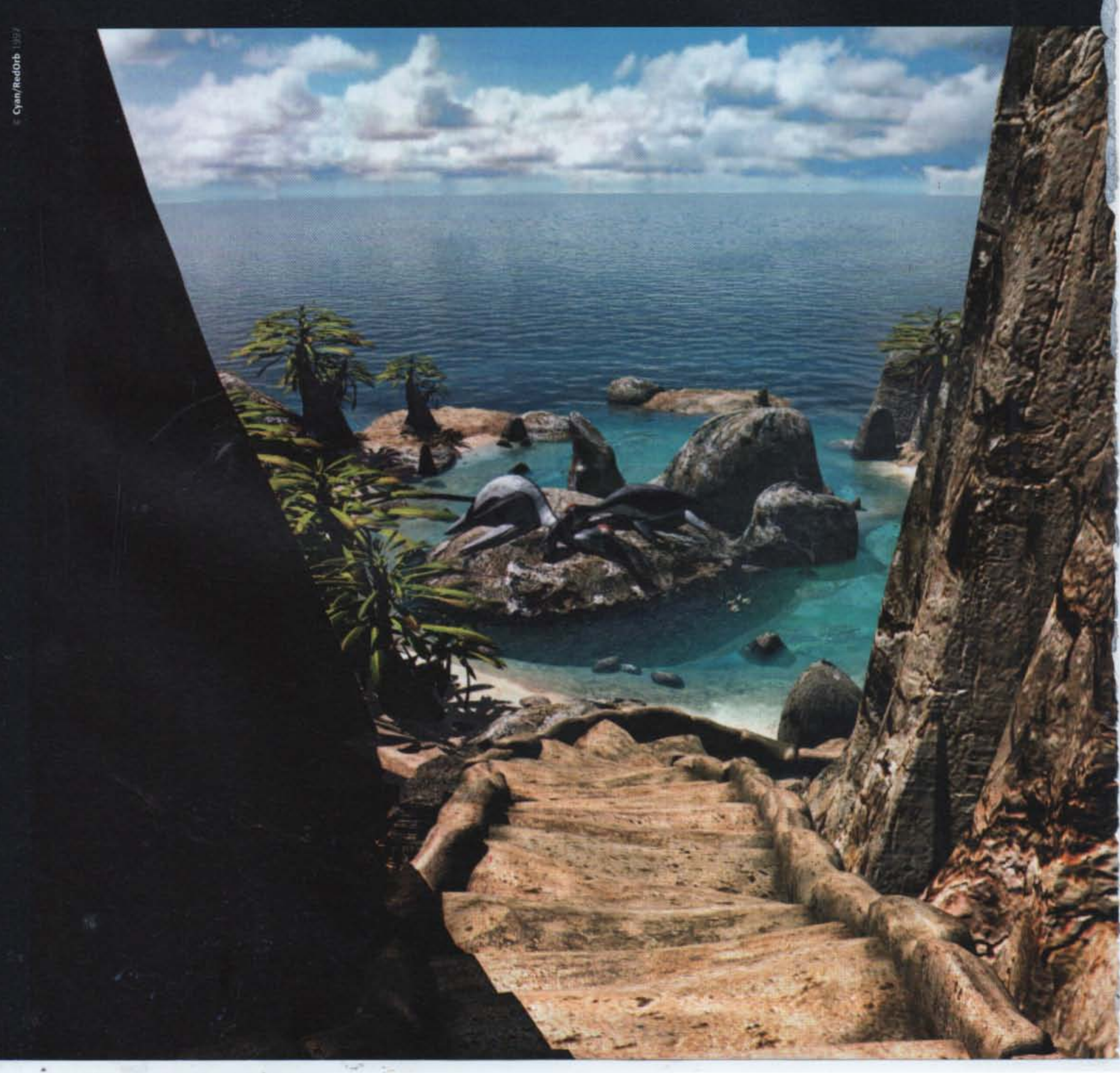
The burgeoning trend for force-feedback is also indulged, the ride-on machine vibrating according to track surface and engine note. In a welcome touch, selecting the fiercer 400cc-engined bikes results in larger vibrations.

With its emphasis on accessible, full-on gameplay, *Motocross Go!* should be a popular choice when it hits the street, just as Sega's *Enduro Racer* was in the '80s.



Gallery

Few games can boast sales of over three million, but that's what the CGI-packed adventure *Myst* achieved. Now its creator has unveiled the successor, *Riven*, and the wealth of sumptuous locales it contains...





Few CGI artists have the vision and expertise of US developer Cyan, the team behind the three-million-selling *Myst* and its long-awaited sequel *Riven*. The game's photorealistic look comes from the textures, many of which were sourced from scanned photographs from a trip to Santa Fe. There are around 4,000 frames in the game which occupy over two hours of video playback.

Images rendered by Cyan using *Softimage*

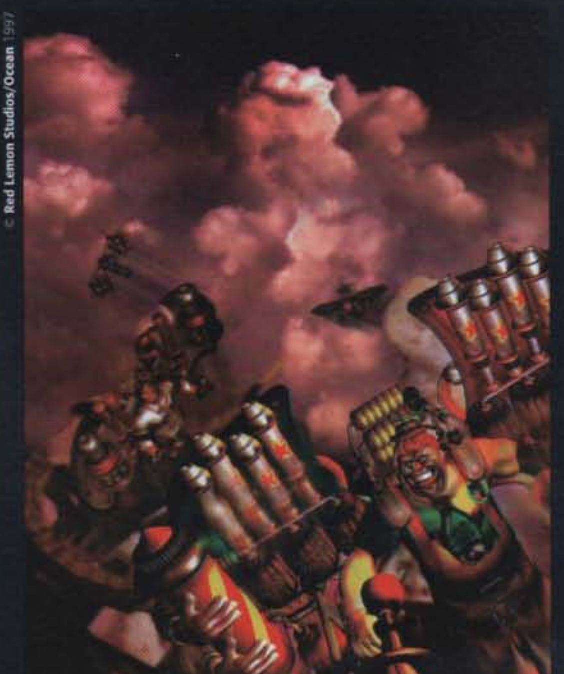


The standard of CGI set by Cyan presented a considerable drain on the company's resources during *Riven*'s development – four SGI Challenge L servers were packed to the max with terrabytes of graphic data rendered in *SoftImage*.

Artistic influences for the vast and imaginative locations ranged from African, Arabic and Celtic civilisations.

Images rendered by Cyan using *Softimage*







These colourful images are from Glasgow-based Red Lemon Studios' forthcoming *Aironauts*, a kind of futuristic '*PilotWings* with weapons' wherein dangerous prison inmates serving multiple life sentences are forced to take part in a 'Running Man'-style television show, fighting each other within huge arenas for the public's entertainment and promised freedom.

Images rendered using *3D Studio v4*, *3D Studio Max* by Red Lemon Studios' Michael Kane

▶



Innerloop's *Joint Strike Fighter* champions realtime visualisation with its sophisticated IFS landscape technology, but if these renders are anything to go by the company can also get to grips with high-quality CGI.

Images rendered using *3D Studio* by Innerloop's Rune Spaans in Oslo, Norway



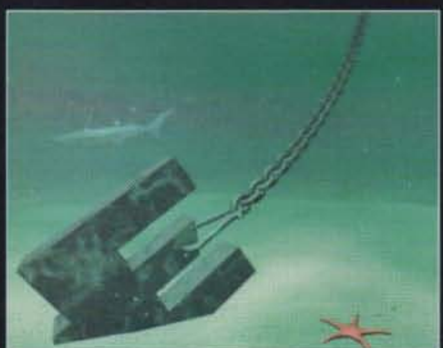
Cover versions

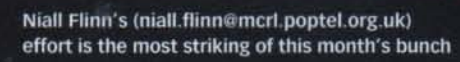
Edge has received several examples of artwork based on its its incovers concept. All three receive free subscriptions to the magazine. More entries are welcome











Niall Flinn's (niall.flinn@mcrl.poptel.org.uk) effort is the most striking of this month's bunch



Carsten Kolve (ckolve@wallance.free.de) used *Caligari Truespace 3* and *Corel Photo Paint*



Milton Keynes' Matthew Underwood (Matt@dotatdot.powernet.co.uk) used *Povray 3.1*

Send your CGI to: Incovers, **Edge**, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW. Just about every file format is acceptable

***Edge** apologises to Simon Dew, whose work was featured in issue 50, for printing his website address incorrectly – it should have been www.acute.force9.co.uk*

Super Bomberman

Multiplayer gaming was as big five years ago as it is today. One game in particular was responsible for its rise and rise...







As players' explosions grow in power, the tension rises (above right)





One of the keys to success in ***Super Bomberman*** lay in the swift collection of power-ups, represented in simple icon form (above left)

Bomberman originally appeared as a coin-op and as a game card for the PC Engine (in 1990). The pioneering multitap adaptor available for NEC's 8bit pocket powerhouse allowed up to five players to compete simultaneously in what must surely be one of the greatest multiplayer games ever devised.

But despite 8bit and 16bit versions of the game appearing (an Amiga version notably gained a lot of attention on the computer gaming scene in the guise of *Dynablaster*), it wasn't until the arrival of the Nintendo interpretation, the SNES classic *Super Bomberman*, that HudsonSoft's premise of mazes, bombs and big-headed protagonists garnered worldwide popularity.

Although capable of supporting 'only' four players, *Super Bomberman* contained the elements of its precursors and refined gameplay until it sparkled.

The result? A game that brought out unheard-of levels of fevered competitive energy from its participants.

Four sequels have now been released on the SNES (only one of which being released in the west), but *Bomberman* purists still swear by the 16bit Nintendo instalment as the definition of gaming heaven.

Publisher: HudsonSoft	1993	No 22
Developer: In-house	SNES	

Midway Arcade's Greatest Hits 2

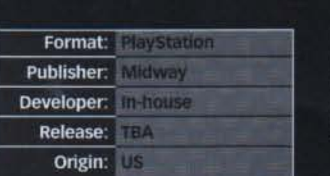
Arcade game manufacturers seem to struggle in releasing retro compilations packed with strictly top-quality reissues. Midway's latest attempt doesn't look set to change the rules...

The relatively healthy success of Midway's first retro pack – which brought together the classics *Asteroids*, *Super Breakout*, *Centipede*, *Tempest*, *Missile Command* and *Battlezone* – (for what is such a niche area, at least) has inspired a sequel for the PlayStation. The six-game line-up consists of the usual mix of the well-known and the more obscure.

Of the 'lead' titles, driving game fans of old will surely relish the prospect of playing *Spy Hunter*, whose top-down perspective saw gamers hammering up the vertically scrolling screen while ramming and shooting at other vehicles, and leaving smoke screens and oil slicks

Joust 2 – which was never actually released in the arcades – will be similarly welcome, as will *Root Beer Tapper*, in which players dispensed refreshment to over-eager punters in various bars.

The primitive space-based shooters *Moon Patrol* and *Blaster* bring up the rear along with the downright hatstand *Splat*, in which players indulge in food fights. An eclectic collection indeed.



Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Midway
Developer:	In-house
Release:	TBA
Origin:	US







This compilation is, typically, a mixed bag, and includes (from left) the very odd ***Splat***, the simplistic ***Moon Patrol***, and the amusing ***Tapper***

DEVELOP

VIDEOGAME CREATION UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Net Yaroze moves into second gear – and academia







Japanese Yaroze demos, especially *Terra Incognita* (above), are impressively polished

In the late '80s, it looked as though the bedroom programmer was facing extinction. The 16bit consoles dominating the industry were closed systems, their expensive dev kits available only to officially licensed developers. At the same time the PC was becoming an increasingly complex platform to work on, with massive rendered sequences and FMV cut-scenes replacing gameplay as the most important factors in commercial titles. The solitary coders who had beavered away on countless 8bit titles in the confinement of their boudoirs were being pushed to the margins of the industry as unloved and irrelevant hobbyists.

Enter Sony, however, and, with it, change. Not only did the company create the PlayStation, one of the most commercially successful pieces of videogame hardware ever, but its designer Ken Kutaragi also made the decision to develop a reasonably priced programmable version of the machine for hobbyist coders. The aim was to encourage anyone with knowledge of C to have a go at game development, to create demos, and to swap information and files over the Internet via a dedicated Yaroze website. This was not just a philanthropic endeavour, however. Sony realised there was masses of untapped potential within the amateur programming sector which was being excluded from mainstream development. Encouraging these individuals to develop for the PlayStation was a means of securing fresh talent and new ideas for the machine which perhaps could not have appeared through the rigorous market-testing of the major publishers. Game programming was coming home.

Six months ago the machine was released in Europe, not that many gamers would have noticed. Yaroze – or Net Yaroze as the complete programming package is named – is available via the Internet or through SCE (0171 447 1616) only, and prospective owners have to fill out an application form to become a Net Yaroze 'member'. Membership (which costs £549) gives users the machine, two CD-ROMs full of software development tools, a serial cable to connect the Yaroze to a PC, and, finally, access to the dedicated website.

Over the last few months, the latter has grown significantly. When **Edge** first reported on Yaroze in **E**41, it was not clear how comprehensive the site would be, but now the online meeting place is flourishing, offering technical support, advice, links to dedicated news groups and free web space to members so that they can set up their own pages offering demos and utilities. Plus, although there are several websites for different areas of the globe, all are accessible to members, which means users can swap ideas internationally. And its not only amateurs using the service; Lewis Evans – who provides Yaroze technical support at Sony Computer Entertainment – told **Edge** that videogame professionals are now buying their own Yarozes and joining in online debates, which no doubt gives wannabe developers invaluable feedback from the 'legitimate' industry.



Sarah Bennett, the UK product manager for Net Yaroze, believes that hundreds are using the machine in Britain

The big questions are, however, how many people are using the system and how talented are they? Sarah Bennett, the product manager for Yaroze in the UK, reckons there are 'several thousand' Yaroze users worldwide, hundreds of whom are based in Britain. It may not sound like a huge amount, but the machine has had a comparatively modest profile so far, reflecting Sony's insistence that it is a serious programming system rather than a mainstream toy.

The quality of the work, however, is more immediately impressive. Sony has recently compiled two discs full of Yaroze demos – one set from Japan and one from Europe – and both have their moments of potential. It is the Japanese work that shows most promise at the





The power of the Yaroze has yet to be completely harnessed by amateur gamers. However, Japanese hobbyists are obviously getting the gist of things: this shoot 'em up (left) and *Final Fantasy VII* spoof (right) reveal real visual finesse

moment: *Terra Incognita*, for example, is a passable platform RPG with camera zoom and multiple view angles, while *Fatal Fantasy VII* is a very, very brief – but highly accomplished – dig at Square's masterpiece. The rest of the disc varies between bizarre experiments, *Pac-Man* clones and scrolling shoot 'em ups, some of which at least resemble proper games.

There are some bright moments on the Europe disc, too. Amongst the limited visual demos is *Clone* by Stuart Ashley, for example, a first-person shooter which features a believable dungeon environment, scary ambient sound effects and many of the other key elements of the genre (a map screen, locked doors, a strafing facility, etc). The baddies are very rough and the backgrounds are limited, but its a good start along the right road. Also nice to look at are Lars Barstad's colourful 3D *Pac-Man* clone *Coneman*, and Ira Rainey's third-person shooter, *HSFK*, which features very rough but nevertheless recognisable polygon figures. Most seem to have worked more on visual effects or copying well-known genres than working on new gameplay ideas, which is a little disappointing. However, these are early days. Coders will certainly be driven by what Namco proved could be done within the PlayStation's 3.5 megabytes – *Ridge Racer*.

Regardless of how soon it will be before hobbyists *really* get to grips with Sony's 32bit box, UK developers certainly seem to be taking notice of Yaroze users. Computer science graduate **Scott Evans**, for example, was having little luck attracting the attention of games companies until he bought a Yaroze.

'After a couple of busy months learning to code for the PlayStation, I sent my CV to an agency and was expecting to wait several weeks before I heard anything,' he explains. 'To my surprise, one week later I had a couple of job interviews lined up, and later received a firm offer from Code Masters which I accepted.'

And there has been further exciting news for Yaroze users over the last couple of months. Foremost perhaps is the news that Kinetix is now offering *3D Studio 4* to Net Yaroze members for the massively reduced price of £375, as well as 2D design package *Animator Pro 1.3* for the similarly sublime £175. The former is, of course, one of the key 3D design and modelling packages available to industry professionals and, as the Yaroze machine comes with conversion tools, *3DS* output can easily be integrated into Yaroze demos. It's an excellent opportunity for those interested in breaking into videogame development to gain vital 3D modelling experience – plus, it's another indication that the software industry as a whole is taking Yaroze seriously.

But potential games programmers who can't afford to splash out on Yaroze needn't worry. Middlesex University is currently building a Yaroze lab at its computer science department – the first of its kind in the country. When finished, the facility will complement the videogame development component of the university's BSc in Applied Computing, and its MSc in Computer Graphics – amongst the first academic qualifications in Britain to feature a videogame design element.

The lab reflects the university's long commitment to computer graphics. As **Dr Peter Passmore**, programme leader for graphics in the school of computing, points out, 'We've been specialising in computer graphics at this university for a long time – both in computer science and also through our centre for electronic arts. We've run an MSc in computer graphics for about ten years now, and past students of that course have gone on to do all sorts of things, including movie special effects, but many have gone into games development.'

Despite this institutional interest, student curiosity about Yaroze was reasonably low at the beginning. 'When Yaroze first came into being at the beginning of last year, Sony asked if some of our MSc students would like to use them for projects,' says Passmore. 'At the time no one was interested, but last year a third year student of mine became a beta tester for Sony and used Yaroze for his MSc project, and it was from there that we decided to build the lab.'

Interestingly, since publicity about the development lab has grown, greater numbers of students are showing interest in the videogame development aspect of the course – a promising sign for the industry.

So, then, since its European inception in February, the Yaroze initiative has gained both a cult following amongst amateur and professional programmers, and serious interest from academic establishments. Although Middlesex currently has the only Yaroze lab in the country, other academic institutions are showing interest in the idea, and more are sure to follow. Away from academia, the example of Scott Evans shows that Yaroze users are sending out a message to game publishers that they are serious about developing console titles and are seriously employable. As practical experience is much more respected in this industry than academic qualifications, Sony's intriguing black machine could well become an invaluable aid to would-be game professionals. **E**





European demos have attempted key genres with a little success. *Clone* (above) is good







Many of the demos on Sony's European Yaroze disc, like *Manicx* (left) and *Car G1* (centre), stick with a 2D perspective. However, some users attempted a simple 3D environment – like Lars Barstad, with polygonal *Pac-Man* clone *Coneman*



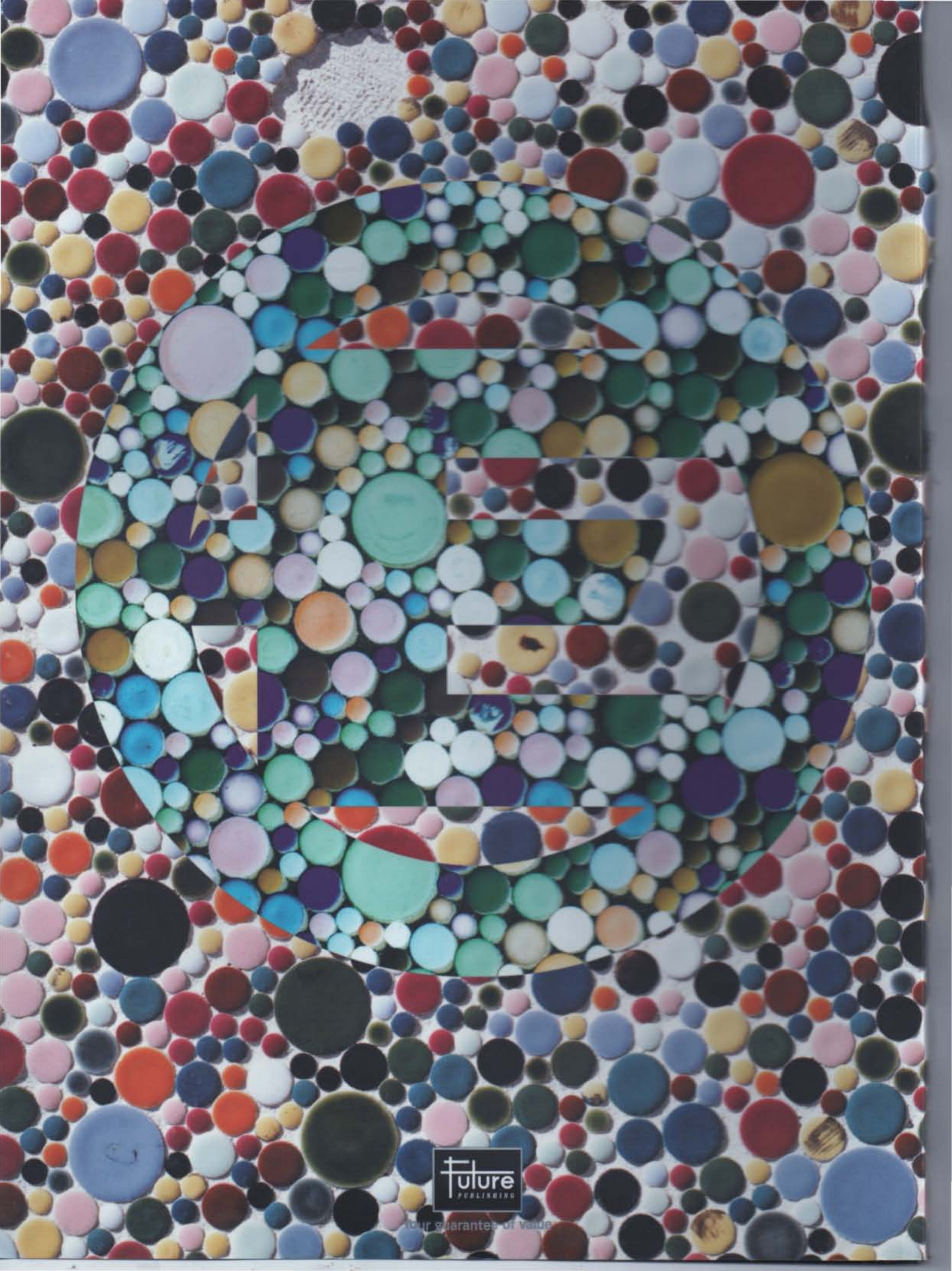
Having tied the knot with Nintendo and been bolstered by millions of dollars of investment, Rare's reputation as a premier league developer has blossomed beyond recognition since its 8bit days as Ultimate Play the Game. Classics such as *Knight Lore* and *Sabre Wulf* will evoke fond memories from old-school gameheads, while *Blast Corps* and the modern classic *GoldenEye* provide evidence that the company has not lost its touch in the 64bit age. Next issue **Edge** visits Rare's Warwickshire HQ for exclusive, unprecedented access to one of the most clandestine codeshops in the world.

Edge 53 also takes a look at the cash being pumped into marketing videogames as the industry prepares to head into the Christmas boom period. Shifting demographics and more sophisticated interactive entertainment have matured the market in the past few years, but is this reflected in the techniques used to sell them?

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